Horror and Science Fiction

DEATH RATTLE

Vol. 2
No. 1

$2.00
2.50 Canada

Mature Readers

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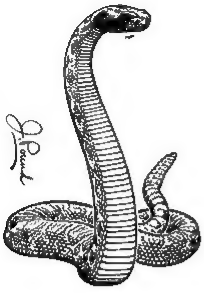

RATTLER...

Welcome to the revival of ***Death Rattle,*** a comic that we believe will curl your toes in anxious enthrallment every other month. The original incarnation of this title appeared in black and white in the early 1970s, the heyday of underground comix. With your vitally needed help, this version, with its top talent, luxuriant, vibrant color, and slick white paper will be haunting comicdom's consciousness for much longer than the first version.

Rand Holmes leads off this issue with a classic science fiction piece, "Killer Planet," painstakingly and lovingly colored by **Bill Poplaski.** New fans of Rand will want to check out his recent two-part ***Harold Hedd in Hitler's Cocaine,*** a color mini-series published by Kitchen Sink Press. Old fans will be delighted to hear that new covers and new science fiction and horror tales by Rand will be appearing in future ***Death Rattles.***

This issue's skin crawler, "Ill Bred," is provided by **Charles Burns,** ghoulishly and imaginatively colored by **Michael Newhall.** Burns resides in Italy these days, but his work appears regularly in ***Heavy Metal*** ("El Borbah") and ***Raw.*** His previous work for us was the marvelously insightful cover of ***Dope Comix*** No. 5.

"Tom Quick" is a true story about a time when men were men and homicidal maniacs were heroes. **Charles Dallas** did the research and the art. **Ray Fehrenbach** provided the color. Some readers will recall Dallas' solo series ***Psychotic Adventures*** and contributions to ***Insect Fear, Paranoia*** and ***Slow Death.***

And let's not forget a shake of the rattler's tail to cover artist **Richard Corben,** who has a worldwide following of fantasy art fans. Rich did this cover for us a few years ago, when we could still afford him. It sat in our musty archives, waiting...quietly waiting, for a time, *the* time...to ***strike!*** This is the time, and if enough of you support this title, we can afford him again. That's not a hint or anything, though...

Death Rattle will deviate somewhat from the typical anthology comics format. For one thing, we will often be featuring *longer* stories. Most science fiction or horror titles consist of several stories ranging from four or five pages to eight or nine pages. That's good enough for a quick jolt of thrills, but doesn't leave much room for characterization and plot development. **Charles Burns'** story in this issue runs 18 pages. We like the way that length in this particular story fleshes out the characters, so to speak.

For another thing, the *total* number of pages devoted to story is larger than the average color comic book. An everyday, mundane color comic gives you 24 or 25 pages of *actual* comics. The rest is advertising. You can look it up. ***Death Rattle*** may cost 25 cents more than other "Baxter"-style comics, but count the comics pages in this issue and you'll find 31 of 32 inside color pages are story and art! Think about this when you compute value.

We'll be running a letters page next issue, if we get enough letters, and they meet our discriminating tastes. Send your bloody opinions to **The Rattler, Kitchen Sink Press, No. 2 Swamp Rd., Princeton WI 54968.**

---------- STAFF ----------

Editor & Publisher_____**Denis Kitchen**
Story Editor_____**Dave Schreiner**
Art Director_____**Peter Poplaski**
Colorists_____**Bill Poplaski**
_____**Mike Newhall, Meg Schwemmer**
_____**and Ray Fehrenbach**
Logo design_____**Don Simpson**
Circulation_____**Holly Brooks**

Watch for *Death Rattle* No. 2 in late December!

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KILLER PLANET

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EXCERPT
CAPT'S LOG
INTERPLANETARY
FREIGHTER-ORION
17-6-2683:

WE WERE *TWO PARSECS* FROM THE *ANTARES CLUSTER*-EN ROUTE TO THE *NEXUS RIMWORLDS*-WHEN THE *LIGHT DRIVE* BLEW.....

...IT CAME AS NO PARTICULAR SURPRISE. EVERYTHING ON THIS OBSOLETE TUB WAS LONG OVERDUE TO MALFUNCTION, BREAKDOWN OR JUST QUIETLY *DISINTEGRATE*

IN THE PASSENGER'S WARDROOM I EXPLAINED THAT, WITHOUT A LIGHT-DRIVE WE WERE STUCK IN THE RELATIVE CONFINES OF AN APPARENTLY UNINHABITED SOLAR SYSTEM.... THE VOICE PIPE INTERRUPTED THE GREENY'S OUTRAGED HISSING

CAPTAIN?... ...I'VE GOT THE SURVEY READ-OUT HERE

GO AHEAD MR. WALDRING

THE STAR'S A YELLOW DWARF... DESIGNATED THETA ON THE CHARTS... ONLY TWO PLANETS, ONE'S A GASBALL THE OTHER - GET THIS - IS ONE OF THE SURVEY CONDEMNED KILLER PLANETS!

MELISSA, THE HUMAN PASSENGER, HAD BEEN DRINKING AS USUAL

HEY SHOULDERS... ..WHAT'S ALL THIS KILLER PLANET STUFF

AHEM... EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE ...AH.. MELISSA... MAYBE ONE IN A THOUSAND PLANETS EXPLORED TURNS OUT TO BE SO DANGEROUS TO HUMAN LIFE THAT IT'S MARKED QUARANTINE IN THE SURVEY DATA BANKS

CAPTAIN... ..THE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM...

WELL... ..MR. GREELB?

SOUNDS LIKE A FUN PLACE.. EH SCALY?

...IT'S A COMPLETE WRITE-OFF ...FUSED AT THE MAINS... NO WAY WE SIGNAL ANYBODY!

DO YOU MEAN WE'RE TRAPPED HERE!?

CAPTAIN SSSSTRAWN! ...I HOLD YOU DIRECTLY RESPONSSSIBLE ...SSSS...

HOLD IT A MINUTE!

THE SURVEY TEAMS PLANTED SIGNAL BEACONS ON ALL THESE KIL... AH... ..QUARANTINE PLANETS... WE'LL SIMPLY HOME IN ON IT... LAND... ACTIVATE THE DAMN THING AND WAIT FOR A PATROL SHIP... SO EVERYBODY JUST RELAX!

I RETURNED TO THE BRIDGE AND ORDERED ZLEEN - OUR NAVIGATOR - TO PUNCH-IN PLANETARY APPROACH CO-ORDINATES WHILE I SCANNED THE ORIGINAL SURVEY REPORT. THETA II TEEMED WITH PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE.. NONE OF IT INTELLIGENT.... ALL OF IT SAVAGELY CARNIVOROUS!

EXCUSE ME CAPTAIN ...I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY IT IN FRONT OF THE PASSENGERS...

ENTERING ATMOSPHERE

...BUT THE DAMAGE WAS DELIBERATE

WHAT!?

ENTERING CLOUD LAYER

YESSIR... ...SO THEN I CHECK THE LIGHT DRIVE DAMAGE A LITTLE CLOSER AN FOUND BITS OF A TIMING DEVICE!

A BOMB?!

..YOU AMAZE ME MR. GREELB

..WHO'D WANT TO PUT A BOMB IN THIS WRECK?

WITHOUT WARNING THE SHIP LURCHED VIOLENTLY THRUSTING GREELB'S DISCOVERY FROM MY MIND AND FLINGING US TO THE DECK

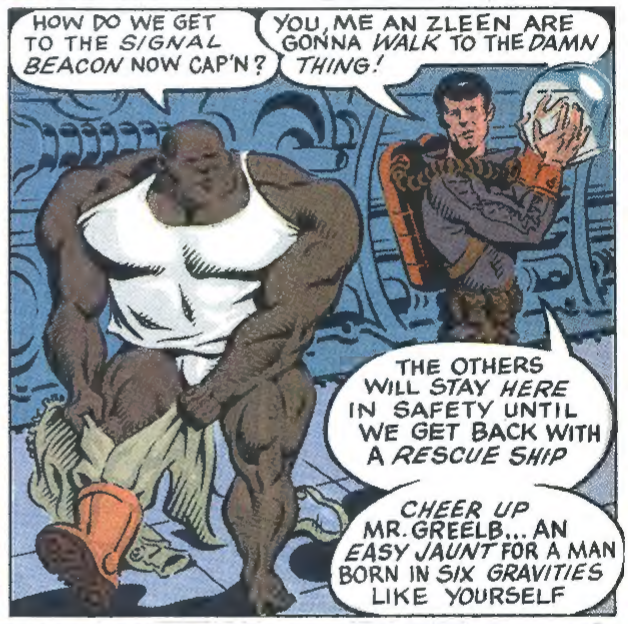
WE WENT IN LIKE A ROCK

PING
UNNHH...KEE-RIST!!

ZLEEN!
...SHITSAKE MAN... ..WHAT HAPPENED?
..POUCH... THE GREEN LEATHER POUCH...HAVE TO GET... THE... POU..

CONCUSSION..
ZLEEN..C'MON ...SNAP OUT OF IT
WHA... ..STRAWN!
JEEZUZ...NO RESPONSE FROM THE STARBOARD LANDING ROCKETS...TRIED TO CUSHION OUR FALL...NOT ENOUGH POWER...

MY GOD!... STRAWN, WHAT HAPPENED!?
THE GREENORLIAN EMBASS-S-Y S-S-SHALL GET A FULL REPORT OF THIS S-S-S... ..OUTRAGEOUSSSs
WE'VE CRASHED ON THE SURFACE
SHIP SEEMS TO BE HOLDING ATMOSPHERE BUT I WANT EVERYONE IN SUITS JUST IN CASE


HOW DO WE GET TO THE SIGNAL BEACON NOW CAP'N?
YOU, ME AN ZLEEN ARE GONNA WALK TO THE DAMN THING!
THE OTHERS WILL STAY HERE IN SAFETY UNTIL WE GET BACK WITH A RESCUE SHIP
CHEER UP MR. GREELB... AN EASY JAUNT FOR A MAN BORN IN SIX GRAVITIES LIKE YOURSELF

I HAD THE COMPUTER PREPARE A MAP FROM THE AERIAL PHOTOS SIR. WE'RE APPROXIMATELY 35 KILOMETRES FROM THE BEACON
THANK YOU MR. WALDRING
MR. GREELB ...BREAK OUT THE ARMS CHEST IF YOU PLEASE
CAPTAIN! THE SHIP..IT'S.. ...WE'RE SINKING!

IT WAS TRUE... WE HAD LANDED IN A SORT OF THICK VISCOUS BOG AND THE SHIP WAS SLOWLY SETTLING IN THE GLUEY MASS.. THERE WAS NO CHOICE. I GAVE THE ORDER TO ABANDON SHIP.
...SPARE OXYGEN SCARF?
GOT IT HERE SIR
BLORP

AS THE DAMNED PLANET LITERALLY SWALLOWED THE SHIP BEFORE OUR EYES I HASTILY DIVIDED THE SMALL ARMS AMONGST PASSENGERS AND CREW
HERE GREELB ...KEEP IT SET AT MAXIMUM
SCARF...SCARF! ...WHERE THE HELL...
THERE HE IS... ...BUT... WHAT'S THAT THING?!

TURNING, I SAW *SCARF* ADVANCING-AS THOUGH *MESMERIZED*-INTO THE *WAITING FANGS* OF ONE OF THE PLANET'S MORE *LOATHESOME MONSTROSITIES*

SCARF.. ..NO!!

I RECOGNIZED *IT* AT ONCE FROM THE SURVEY READOUT: *A DREAMWEAVER* ... TECHNICALLY A *PLANT* SINCE IT WAS *ROOTED* IN THE *SOIL* AND UNABLE TO MOVE.

ABLE TO EXTRACT FROM THE *MIND* OF ITS *INTENDED MEAL* HIS MOST *HEARTFELT DESIRE*-IT THEN *PROJECTS* THAT *IMAGE* DIRECTLY TO THE VICTIM'S *OPTIC NERVE* SO THAT THE *CREATURE* ITSELF *APPEARS* AS THE *DESIRED OBJECT*.

STRAWN

SCARF STILL APPEARED *DAZED* AS HE EXPLAINED WHAT HE'D SEEN. KNOWING HIS *ALL ABIDING PASSION* I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED

FOR *CHRISSAKE* SCARFUPSKI!..USE YOUR *HEAD!*

I KNOW.. ..I KNOW... ..*STUPID!*...BUT.. IT LOOKED SO *DAMNED REAL!*

LEAVING BEHIND A VARIETY OF *BLOATED VINES*-WHICH HAD BEEN GROWING WITH *ALARMING RAPIDITY* IN OUR DIRECTION-WE COMMENCED OUR *TREK* TOWARDS THE *BEACON*

MR. S-S-SCARFUPSKI.. ..HOW DID YOU INTEND TO *EAT* THAT *MEAL* WITH YOUR S-S-SUIT ON??

HA!...THAT WOULDN'T STOP *HIM!*.. ..HE HAD ONE OF THOSE *DE-CONTAMINATION UNITS* INSTALLED IN HIS SUIT JUST SO'S HE COULD EAT *GEEK-WORLD CHOW*...

...AINT THAT RIGHT *SCARFY?*

AAAH... ..BLOW IT OUT YER ASS YA *PHILISTINES!*

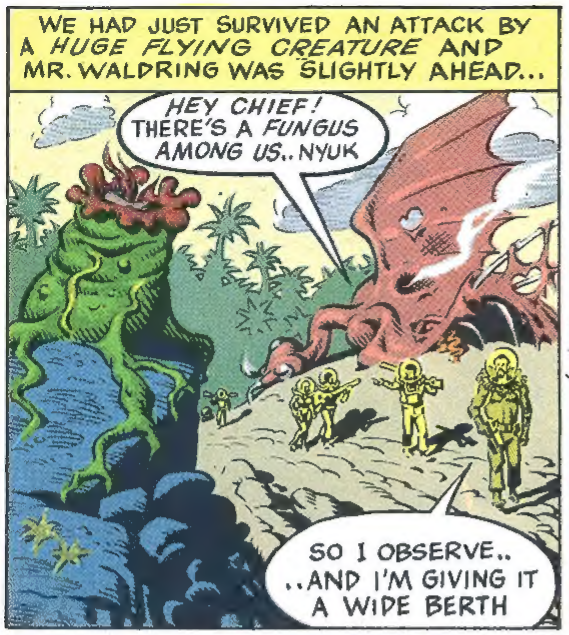
WITHIN MINUTES WE ENCOUNTERED THE FIRST *ANIMAL LIFE*...

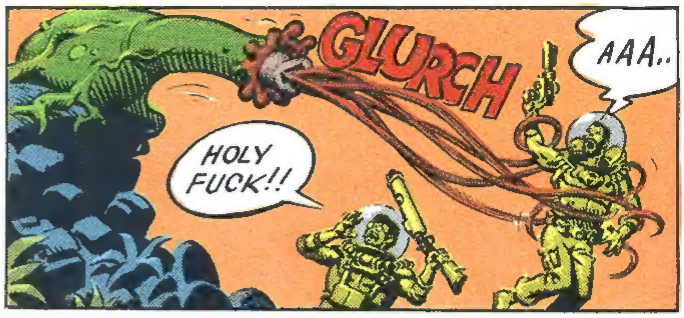
SPUK

...AND FROM THAT POINT ON FACED *CONTINUAL ASSAULT* FROM AN APPARENTLY ENDLESS ARRAY OF *RAPACIOUS LIFE FORMS*

DAMMIT!...THESE THINGS JUST *LIVE TO EAT!*

POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK EH SCARFY?..HA HA


WE HAD JUST SURVIVED AN ATTACK BY A HUGE FLYING CREATURE AND MR. WALDRING WAS SLIGHTLY AHEAD...
HEY CHIEF! THERE'S A FUNGUS AMONG US.. NYUK
SO I OBSERVE.. ..AND I'M GIVING IT A WIDE BERTH

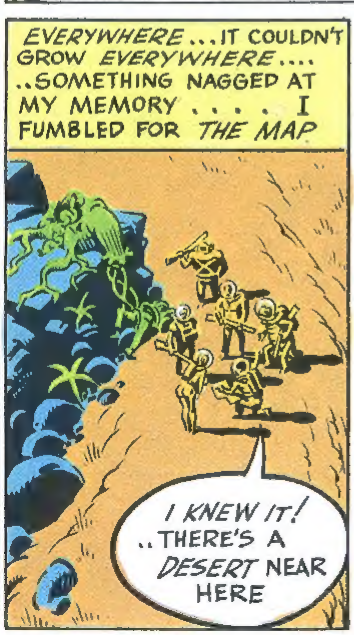

GLURCH
AAA..
HOLY FUCK!!

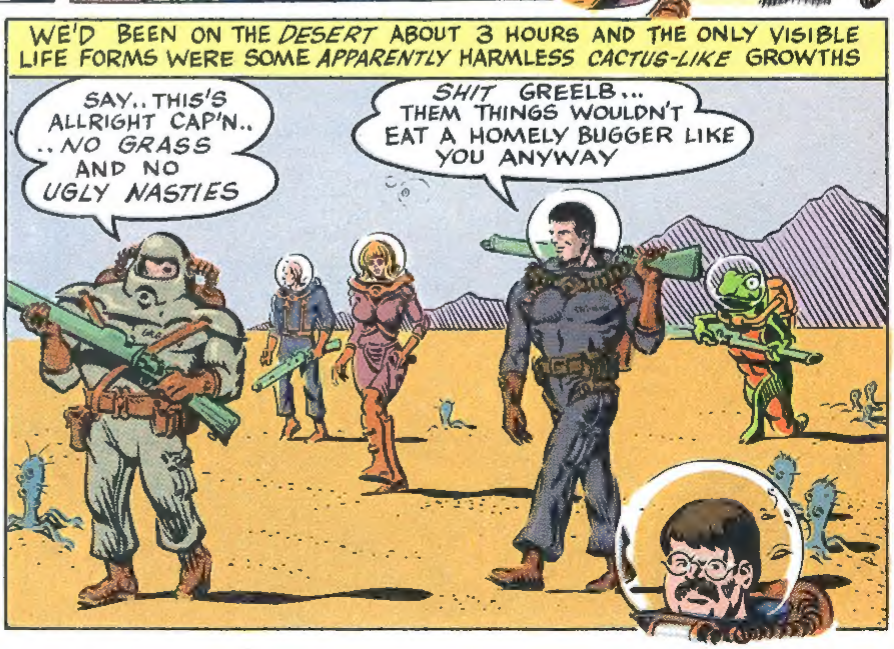
EEEAAAAAAA
CHUG

HE WAS DEAD WHEN WE REACHED HIM - HIS SUIT RUPTURED - FUNGUS GROWTHS ALREADY BLOSSOMING AT MOUTH, EYES AND NOSTRILS.
GET HIS PERSONAL EFFECTS SCARF
HIS SUIT.. ... IT'S EATEN CLEAN THRU
MUST HAVE DIGESTIVE JUICES LIKE SULPHURIC ACID

IT'S NOT JUST HIS SUIT THAT'S CORRODING!..
..ALL OF YOU.. ..LOOK AT YOUR BOOTS!

EXAMINING MY PITTED BOOTS I REALIZED THAT EVEN THE DAMNED GRASS WAS TRYING TO ABSORB US
SEEMS WEAKER THAN THAT THING
BUT IT'S BOUND TO EAT THROUGH EVENTUALLY
AND IT GROWS EVERY--WHERE


EVERYWHERE...IT COULDN'T GROW EVERYWHERE.... ..SOMETHING NAGGED AT MY MEMORY . . . . I FUMBLED FOR THE MAP
I KNEW IT! ..THERE'S A DESERT NEAR HERE


WE'D BEEN ON THE DESERT ABOUT 3 HOURS AND THE ONLY VISIBLE LIFE FORMS WERE SOME APPARENTLY HARMLESS CACTUS-LIKE GROWTHS
SAY.. THIS'S ALLRIGHT CAP'N.. ..NO GRASS AND NO UGLY NASTIES
SHIT GREELB... THEM THINGS WOULDN'T EAT A HOMELY BUGGER LIKE YOU ANYWAY

GRONK
CAPTAIN!

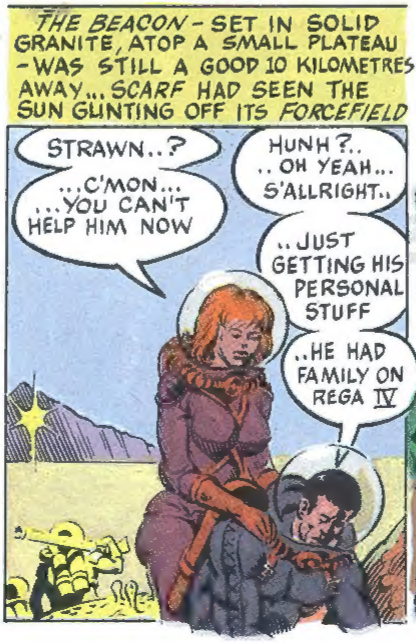
EVEN AS I ATTEMPTED TO ROLL CLEAR I KNEW I'D NEVER MAKE IT.'

UNHHH!
CAPTAIN... ..GET OUT!
CRUNCH

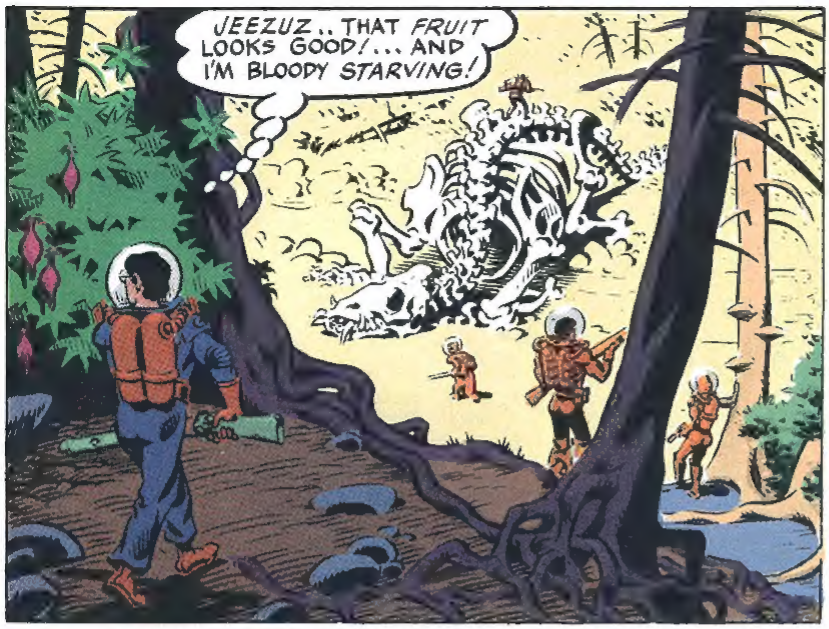
KILL IT! ...KILL IT! ..I CAN'T HOLD...
KRUMP
CHUG CHUG CHUNGN

THE GIGANTIC CLAM-THING, IN ALL ITS MINDLESSNESS, WENT ON CRUSHING THE LIFE OUT OF GREELB LONG AFTER ITS MINISCULE BRAIN HAD BEEN BLASTED TO VAPOR

LOOK!...
CAPTAIN?... IT'S THE BEACON!


THE BEACON - SET IN SOLID GRANITE, ATOP A SMALL PLATEAU - WAS STILL A GOOD 10 KILOMETRES AWAY... SCARF HAD SEEN THE SUN GLINTING OFF ITS FORCEFIELD
STRAWN..?
...C'MON... ...YOU CAN'T HELP HIM NOW
HUNH?.. ..OH YEAH... S'ALLRIGHT..
..JUST GETTING HIS PERSONAL STUFF
..HE HAD FAMILY ON REGA IV

45 MINUTES LATER WE LEFT THE COMPARATIVE SAFETY OF THE DESERT AND-ONCE MORE-ENTERED THE JUNGLE


JEEZUZ.. THAT FRUIT LOOKS GOOD!... AND I'M BLOODY STARVING!

WHAT THE HELL... THE DECONTAMINATOR WILL TAKE CARE OF ANY BACTERIA OR FUNGUS SPORES
HMMMMMM
CLICK

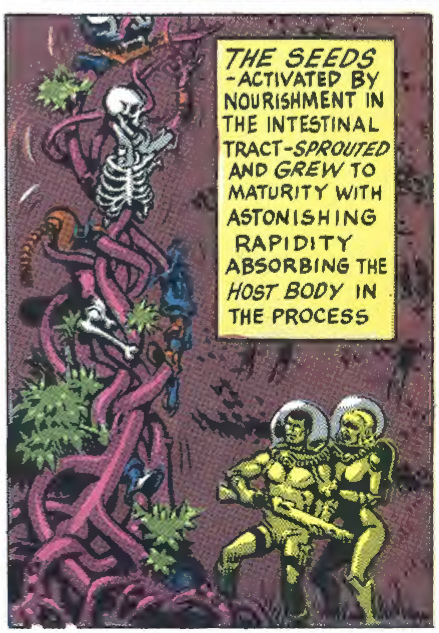
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.. ..IF SOMEONE WANTED TO DESTROY THE SHIP WHY NOT PUT A BOMB IN THE HULL INSTEAD OF JUST DAMAGING THE LIGHT DRIVE?
GREELB SEEMED TO THINK IT WAS SOMEONE ABOARD... ONE OF US

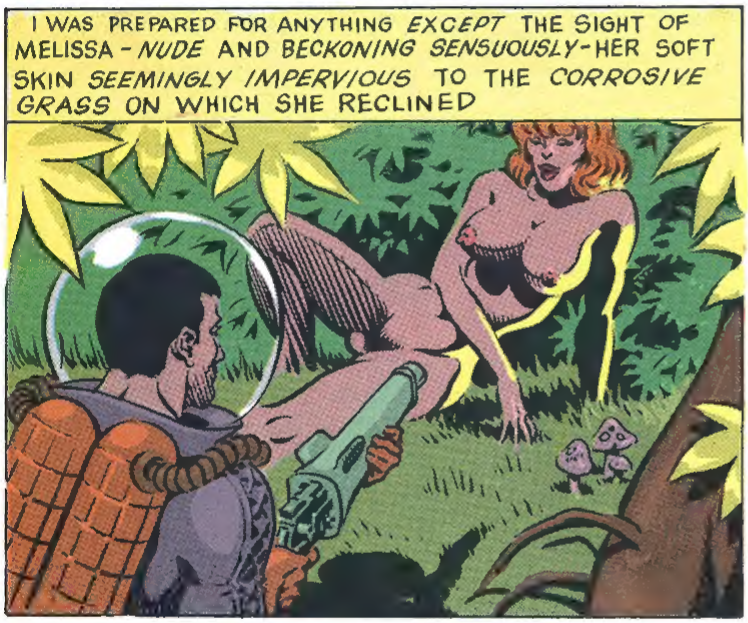
THAT MAKES EVEN LESS SENSE ..UNLESS..
UNLESS?
WELL..WITH THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM SABOTAGED WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO COME HERE TO CALL FOR HELP ..RIGHT?..
..SUPPOSE WHOEVER DID IT WANTED US TO COME TO THIS PLANET

HANH!... COULDN'T BE SCARFUPSKI THEN ... HE LIKES PLANETS WHERE HE CAN EAT THINGS ... NOT PLANETS WHERE THINGS EAT HIM!..
... EH SCARF?

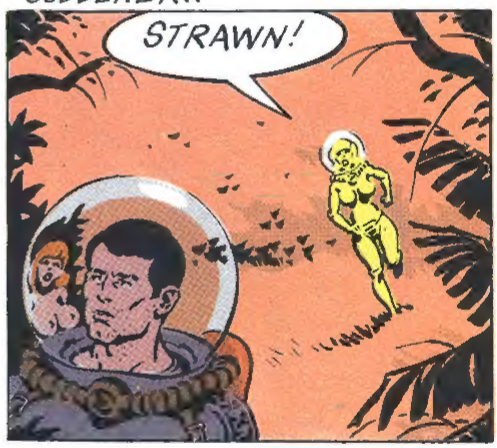
WHAT THE...?
SCARF! NO DON'T!
CHOMP CHOFF

AS WE STARED IN HORROR SCARFUPSKI VIRTUALLY EXPLODED WITHIN THE CONFINES OF HIS SUIT
EEEAAAAA

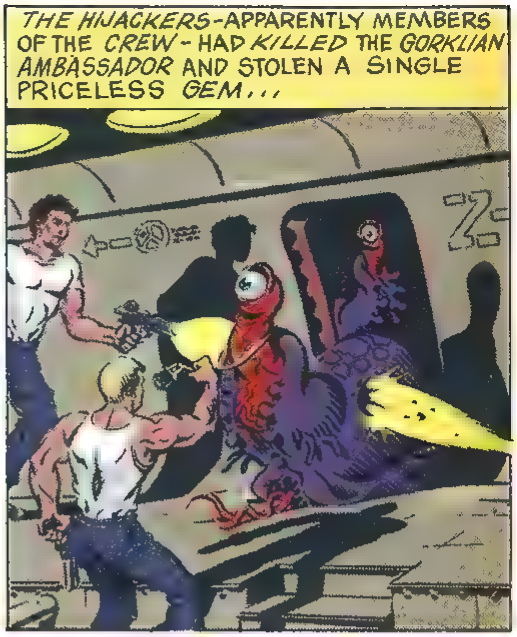

THE SEEDS -ACTIVATED BY NOURISHMENT IN THE INTESTINAL TRACT-SPROUTED AND GREW TO MATURITY WITH ASTONISHING RAPIDITY ABSORBING THE HOST BODY IN THE PROCESS

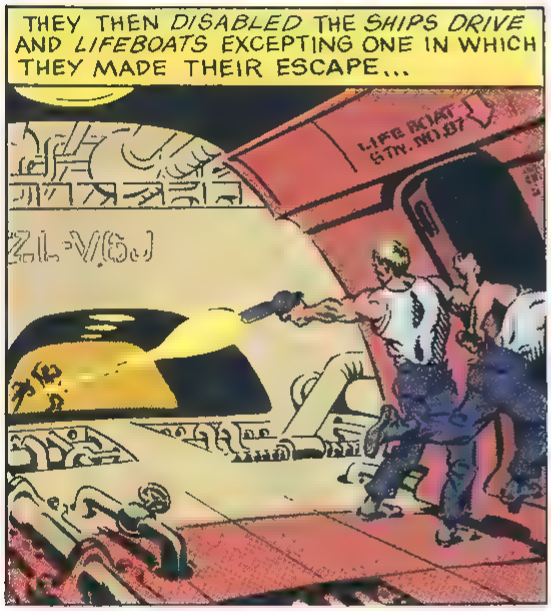


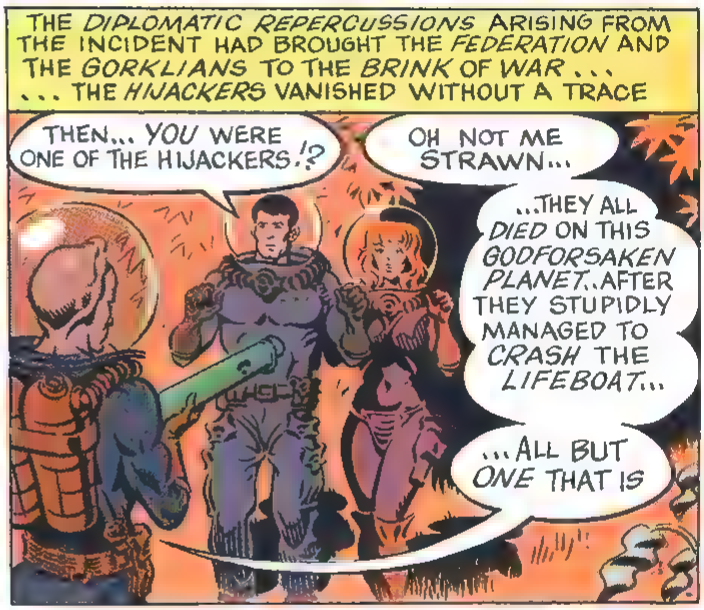
IT WAS ONE OF THE DREAMWEAVERS OF COURSE ... I WAS BACKING AWAY SHOCKED - NOT SO MUCH BY THE CREATURE'S PRESENCE AS BY ITS REVELATION OF THE DEPTH OF MY FEELINGS FOR MELISSA - WHEN SUDDENLY...



THE PERIHELION: A FEDERATION STARSHIP... HAD BEEN HIJACKED -IN THE GULF- OVER A YEAR AGO
....IT CARRIED -AT THE TIME AN EMISSARY FROM A RECENTLY CON -TACTED ALIEN CIVILISATION OF SOME COMPLEXITY


THE HIJACKERS-APPARENTLY MEMBERS OF THE CREW - HAD KILLED THE GORKLIAN AMBASSADOR AND STOLEN A SINGLE PRICELESS GEM...

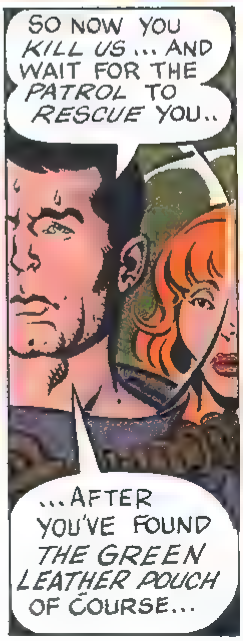

THEY THEN DISABLED THE SHIPS DRIVE AND LIFEBOATS EXCEPTING ONE IN WHICH THEY MADE THEIR ESCAPE...
LIFE BOAT STN. NO.07

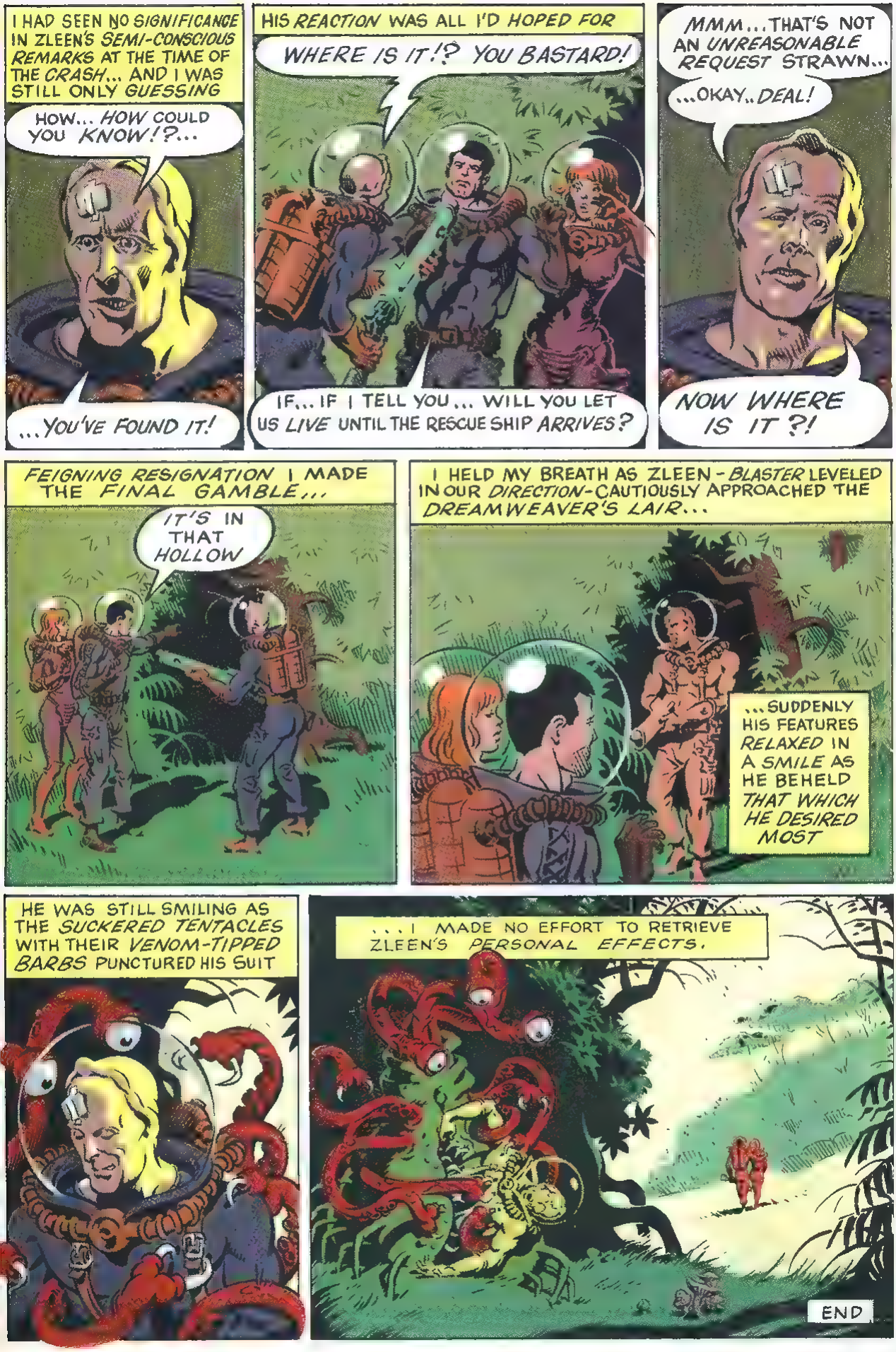

THE DIPLOMATIC REPERCUSSIONS ARISING FROM THE INCIDENT HAD BROUGHT THE FEDERATION AND THE GORKLIANS TO THE BRINK OF WAR ...
... THE HIJACKERS VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE
THEN... YOU WERE ONE OF THE HIJACKERS!?
OH NOT ME STRAWN...
...THEY ALL DIED ON THIS GODFORSAKEN PLANET..AFTER THEY STUPIDLY MANAGED TO CRASH THE LIFEBOAT...
...ALL BUT ONE THAT IS

THE PATROL-ANSWERING THE DISTRESS SIG- -NAL FROM THIS SAME BEACON-FOUND HIM SAFE-BUT DELIRIOUS-WITHIN THE FORCEFIELD ...I FOUND HIM IN A SPACEPORT BAR DRUNK AND TALKATIVE...
THE PATROL HAD MADE NO CONNECTION BETWEEN HIM AND THE PERIHELION HE DIDN'T HAVE THE GEM BUT HE RE- -MEMBERED WHERE THE MAN WHO'D CARRIED IT HAD DIED...
...HE MADE AN EXCELLENT MAP JUST BEFORE I KILLED HIM

THEN YOU SABOTAGED THE LIGHT DRIVE AND THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM JUST SO WE'D BE FORCED TO COME TO THIS BEACON!
...OF COURSE... ..ONLY YOU-THE NAVIGATOR-COULD HAVE TIMED IT SO PRECISELY...
...BUT.. WHY THE CRASH?

ACCIDENT!... ..THAT DAMNED SCOW!... THE BOMB MUST HAVE DAMAGED THE STARBOARD THERMOCOUPLINGS
I'D MEANT TO LAND HERE AT THE BEACON THEN QUIETLY RETRIEVE THE GEM WHILE AWAITING RESCUE ...PERHAPS IT'S BETTER THIS WAY THO... NO MESSY EVIDENCE AT ALL

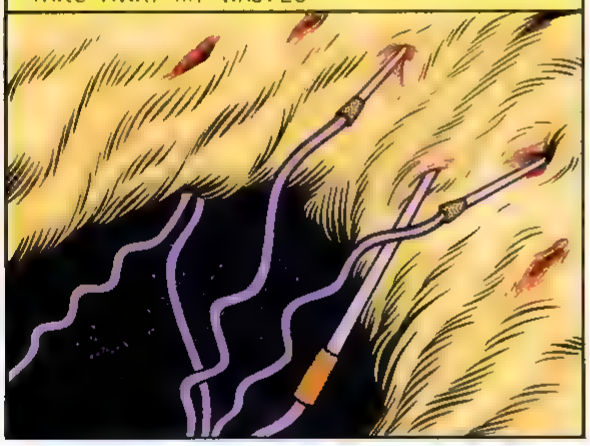

SO NOW YOU KILL US ... AND WAIT FOR THE PATROL TO RESCUE YOU..
...AFTER YOU'VE FOUND THE GREEN LEATHER POUCH OF COURSE...


I HAD SEEN NO SIGNIFICANCE IN ZLEEN'S SEMI-CONSCIOUS REMARKS AT THE TIME OF THE CRASH... AND I WAS STILL ONLY GUESSING
HOW... HOW COULD YOU KNOW!?...
...YOU'VE FOUND IT!
HIS REACTION WAS ALL I'D HOPED FOR
WHERE IS IT!? YOU BASTARD!
IF... IF I TELL YOU... WILL YOU LET US LIVE UNTIL THE RESCUE SHIP ARRIVES?
MMM... THAT'S NOT AN UNREASONABLE REQUEST STRAWN...
...OKAY.. DEAL!
NOW WHERE IS IT ?!
FEIGNING RESIGNATION I MADE THE FINAL GAMBLE...
IT'S IN THAT HOLLOW
I HELD MY BREATH AS ZLEEN-BLASTER LEVELED IN OUR DIRECTION-CAUTIOUSLY APPROACHED THE DREAMWEAVER'S LAIR...
...SUDDENLY HIS FEATURES RELAXED IN A SMILE AS HE BEHELD THAT WHICH HE DESIRED MOST
HE WAS STILL SMILING AS THE SUCKERED TENTACLES WITH THEIR VENOM-TIPPED BARBS PUNCTURED HIS SUIT
...I MADE NO EFFORT TO RETRIEVE ZLEEN'S PERSONAL EFFECTS.
END

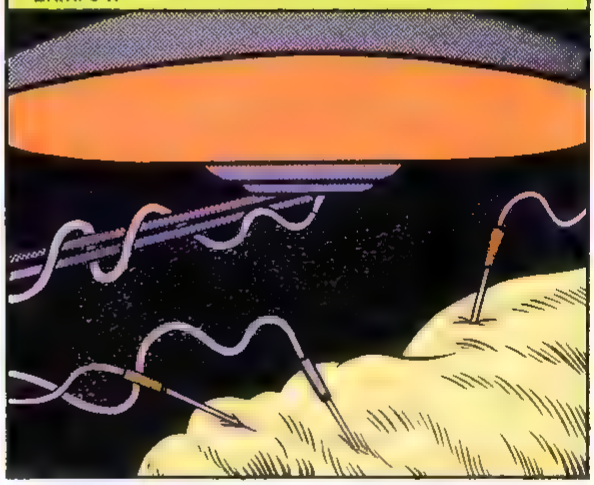
ILL BRED
A HORROR ROMANCE
BY CHARLES BURNS

I'M NOT SURE HOW LONG I'VE BEEN IN THIS ROOM. MONTHS OR MAYBE EVEN YEARS. THE ONLY THING I'M CERTAIN OF IS THE CONSTANT PAIN THAT COVERS MY ENTIRE BODY

I'M IMMOBILE. MY MUSCLES HAVE WITHERED AND BEEN REPLACED BY ROLLS OF FAT... CRUDELY FITTED TUBES ARE ATTACHED TO VARIOUS PARTS OF MY BODY TO FEED ME AND TAKE AWAY MY WASTES

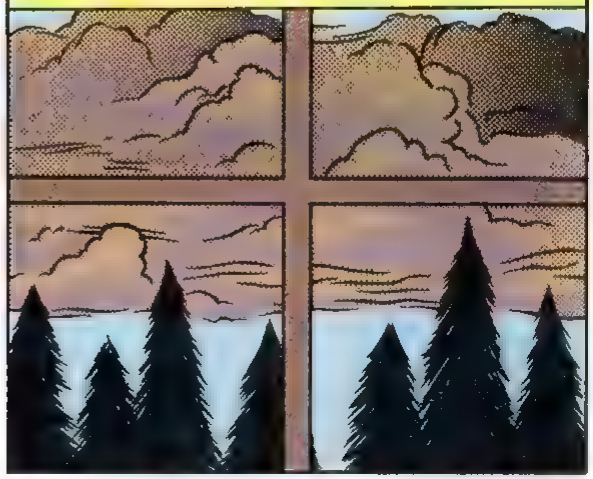


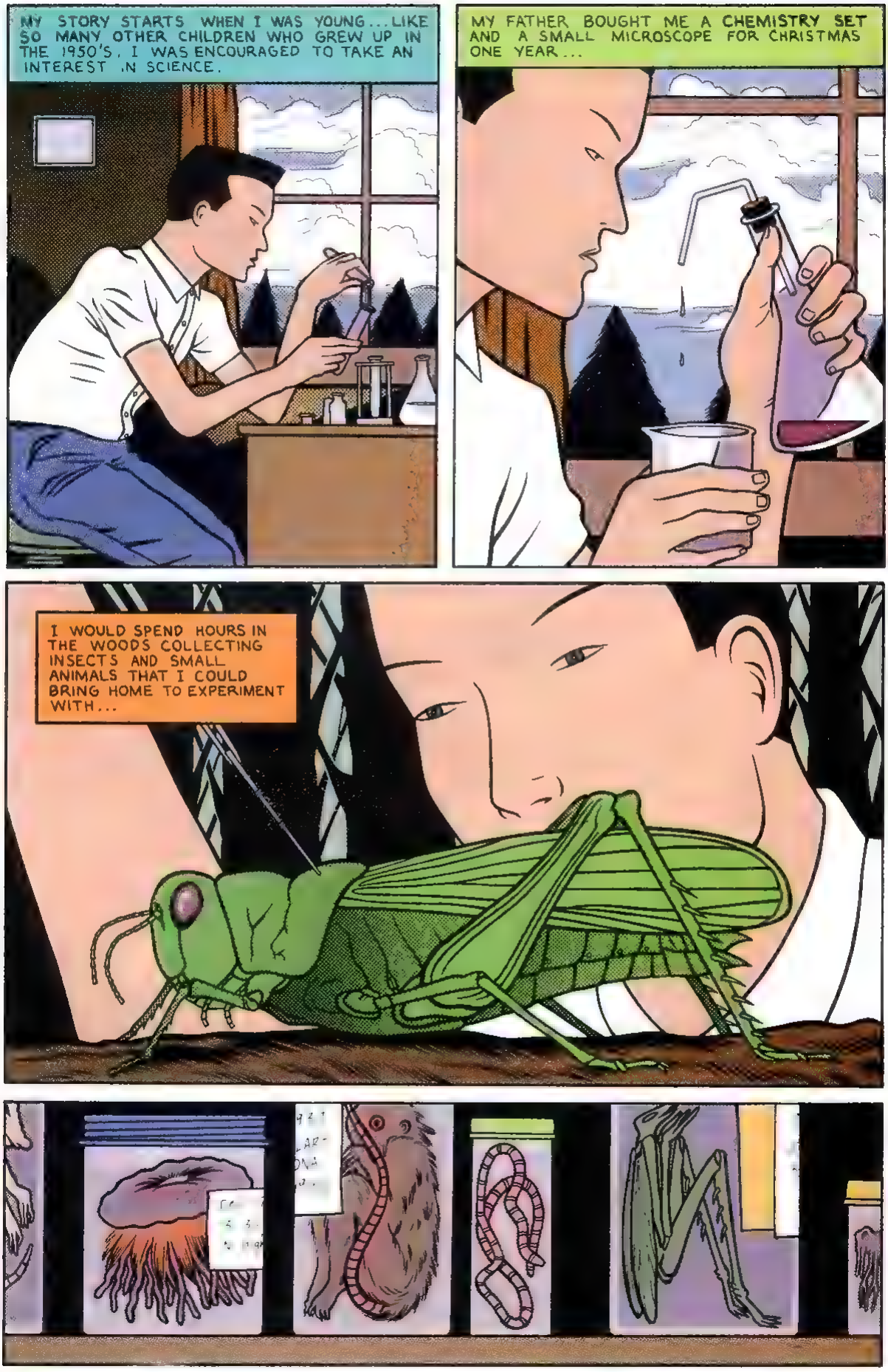
THE ONLY LIGHT IN THE ROOM IS THE SOFT ORANGE GLOW GIVEN OFF BY THE THERMAL LAMPS..



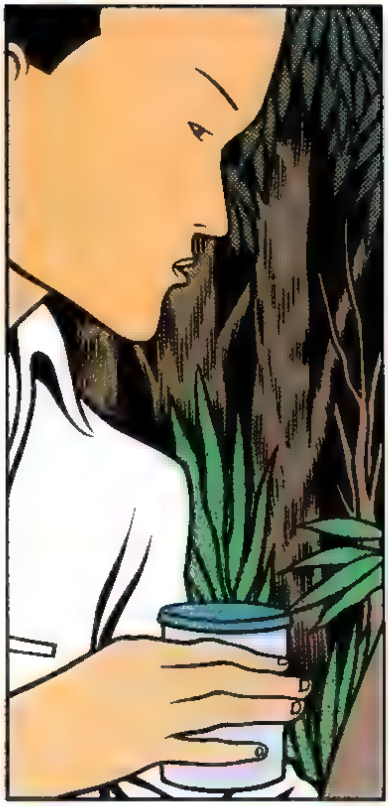
...AND THE WHITE LIGHT OF A SMALL WINDOW AT THE FAR END OF THE ROOM.

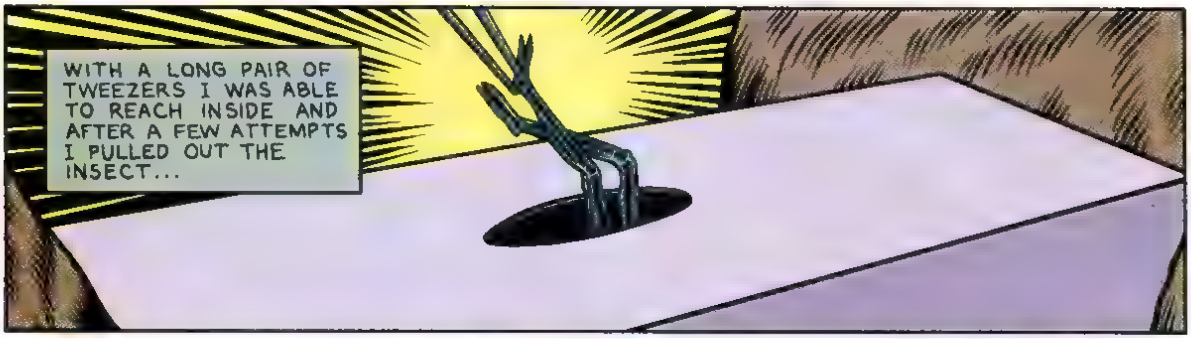
I CAN TELL THAT IT'S RAINING OUTSIDE IT'S ALWAYS RAINING. WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND HEALTHY I SPENT HOURS IN THE RAIN.

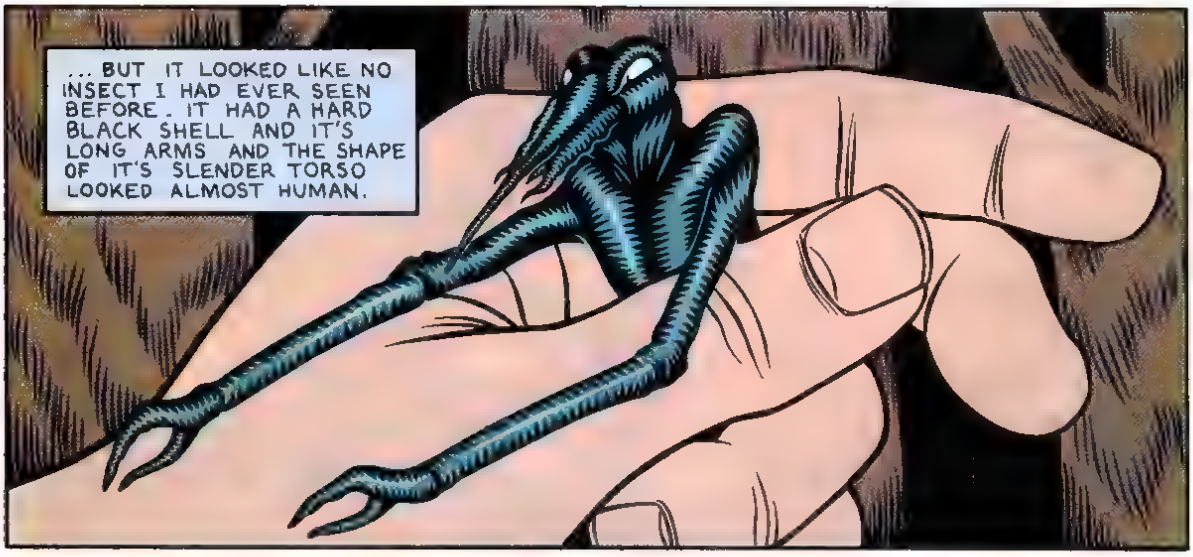



MY STORY STARTS WHEN I WAS YOUNG... LIKE SO MANY OTHER CHILDREN WHO GREW UP IN THE 1950'S, I WAS ENCOURAGED TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN SCIENCE.
MY FATHER BOUGHT ME A CHEMISTRY SET AND A SMALL MICROSCOPE FOR CHRISTMAS ONE YEAR...
I WOULD SPEND HOURS IN THE WOODS COLLECTING INSECTS AND SMALL ANIMALS THAT I COULD BRING HOME TO EXPERIMENT WITH...

ONE AFTERNOON I WAS OUT EXPLORING IN THE WOODS AND CAME ACROSS A NEST BUILT IN THE CROTCH OF A TREE. AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS MANMADE... SOME FORM OF TREE SURGERY. THERE WAS A SMALL HOLE ON THE TOP AND I COULD JUST MAKE OUT A TINY BLACK FIGURE MOVING INSIDE...





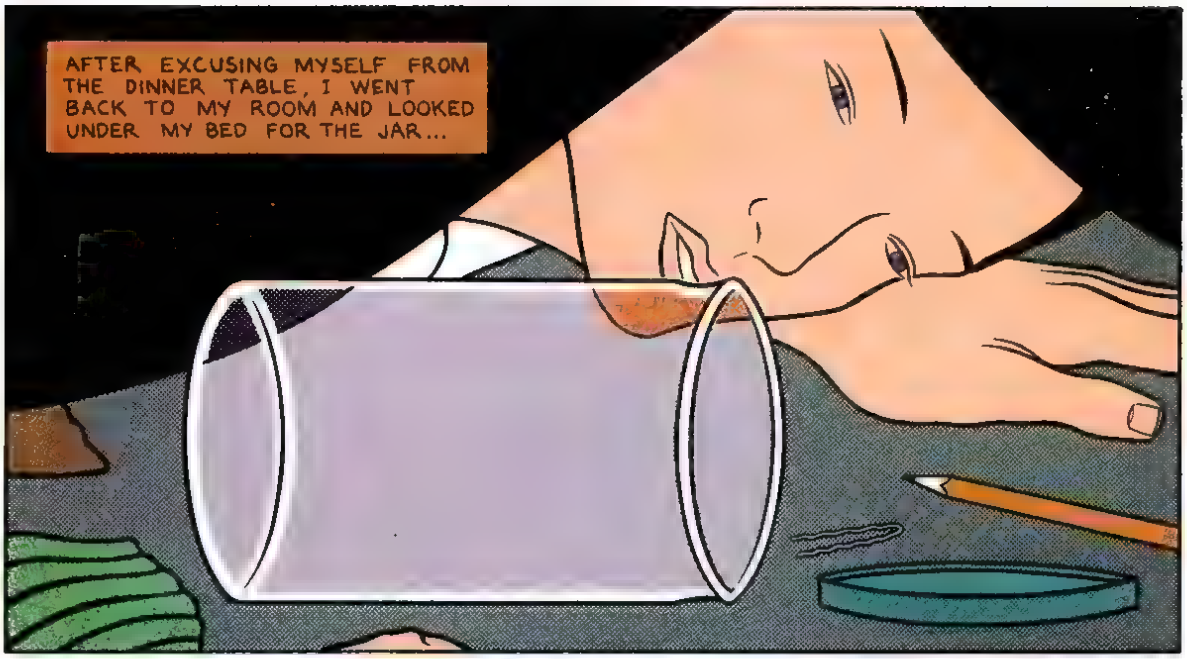


AFTER PLACING THE INSECT IN A SPECIMEN JAR, I RETURNED HOME TO EXAMINE IT.

MY PARENTS DIDN'T LIKE ME TO KEEP LIVE ANIMALS IN THE HOUSE SO I HAD TO HIDE IT UNTIL I WAS IN MY BEDROOM.

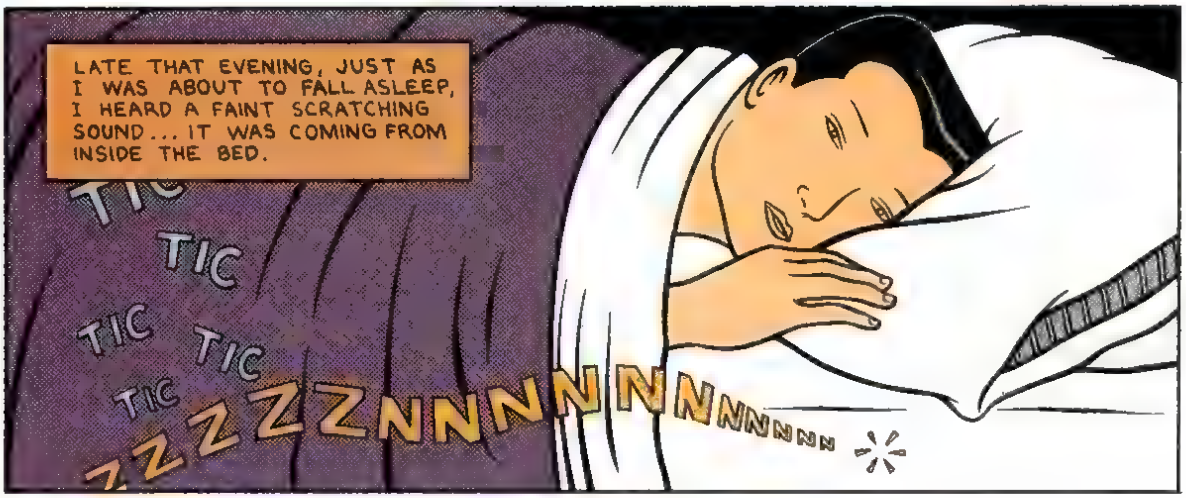
WHEN I WAS CALLED DOWN TO DINNER, I HID THE JAR UNDER MY BED...
I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN, MOM!

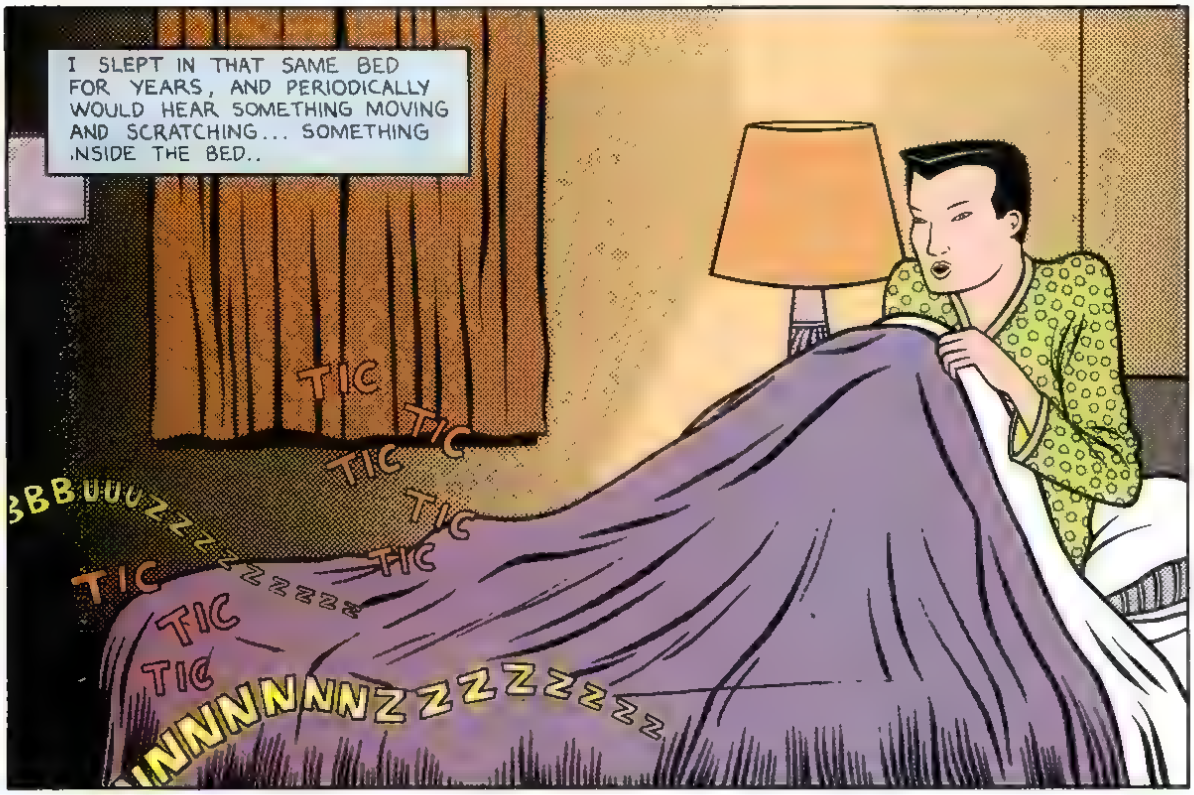
WELL...TELL US WHAT YOU DID TODAY RON...
OH... NOTHING.

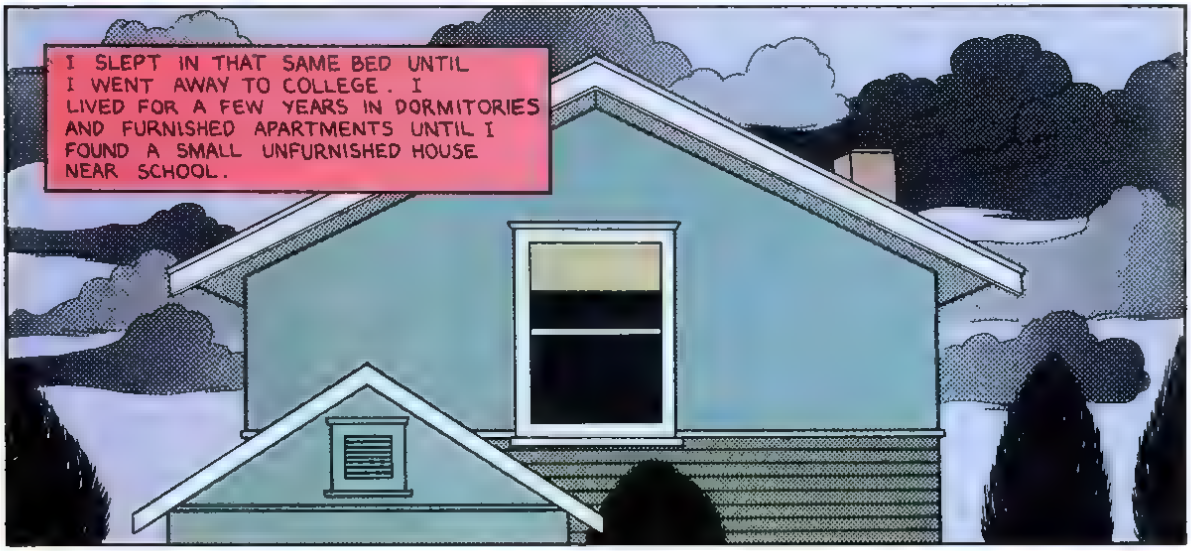

AFTER EXCUSING MYSELF FROM THE DINNER TABLE, I WENT BACK TO MY ROOM AND LOOKED UNDER MY BED FOR THE JAR...

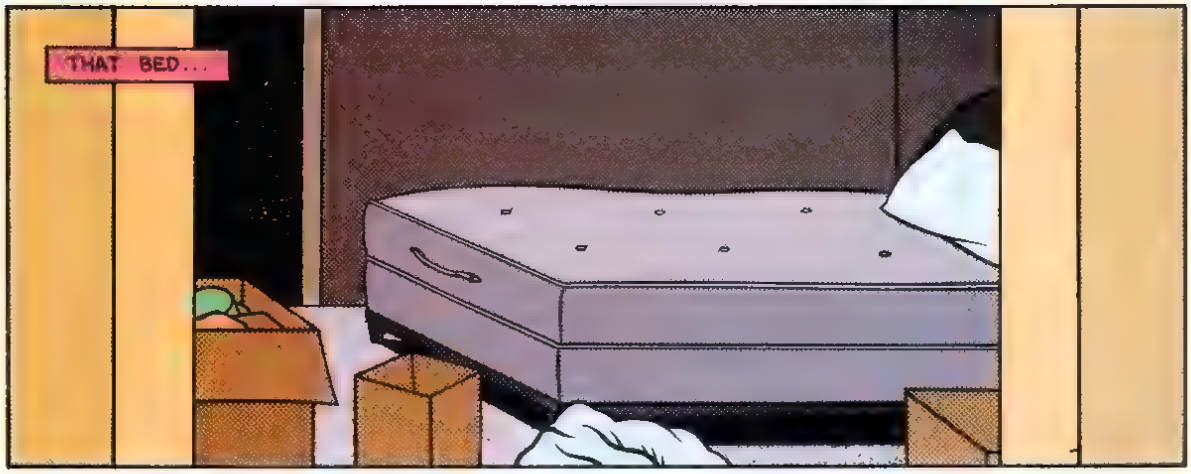
...ONLY TO FIND IT OPEN... THE INSECT HAD ESCAPED!
OH NO!

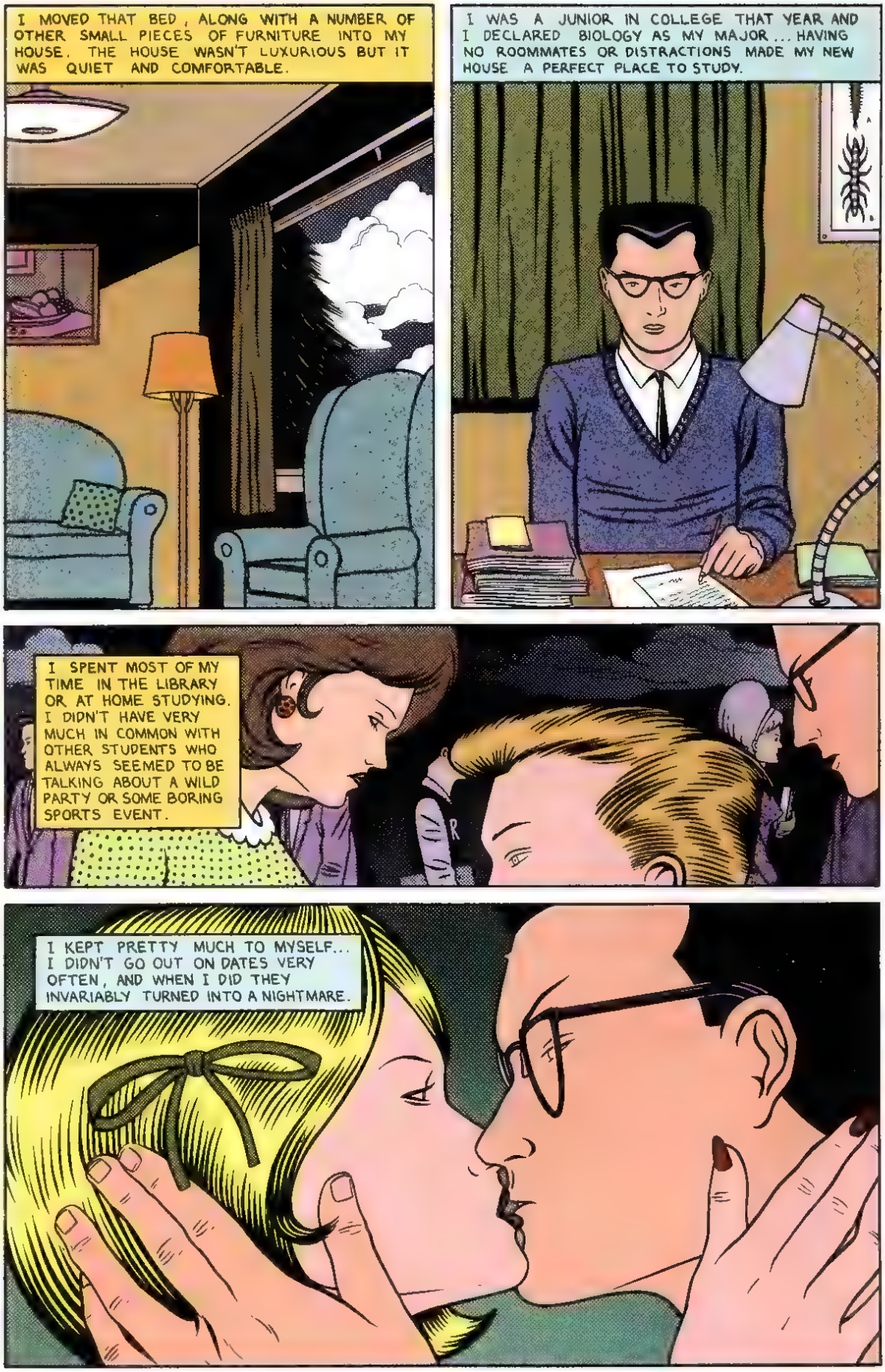
I SEARCHED EVERYWHERE, BUT IT WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

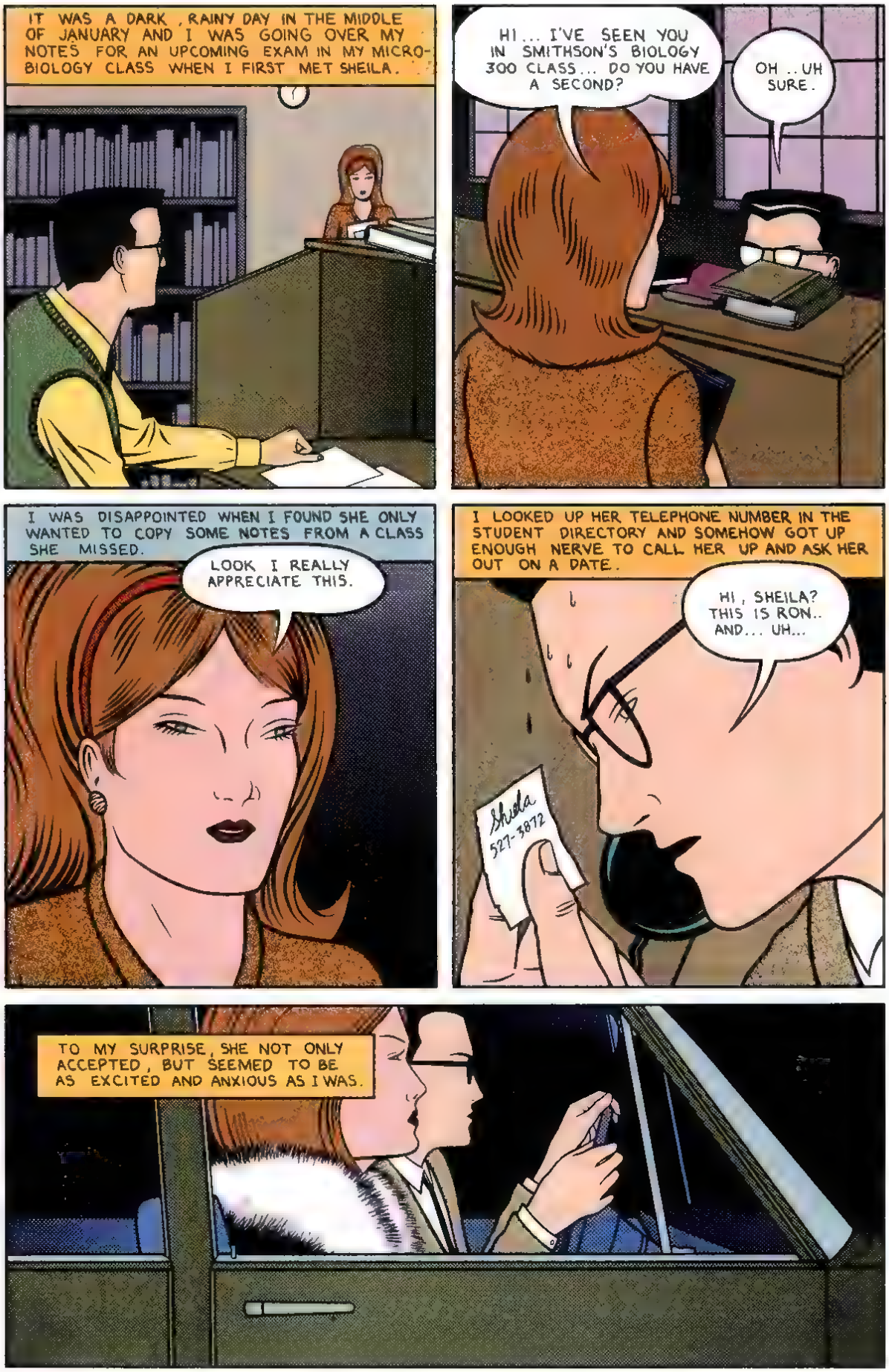

LATE THAT EVENING, JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO FALL ASLEEP, I HEARD A FAINT SCRATCHING SOUND... IT WAS COMING FROM INSIDE THE BED.
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
ZZZZZNNNNNNNNNNN


I SLEPT IN THAT SAME BED FOR YEARS, AND PERIODICALLY WOULD HEAR SOMETHING MOVING AND SCRATCHING... SOMETHING INSIDE THE BED..
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
BBBUUUZZZZZZZZZZZZ
INNNNNNZZZZZZZZZZZ


I SLEPT IN THAT SAME BED UNTIL I WENT AWAY TO COLLEGE. I LIVED FOR A FEW YEARS IN DORMITORIES AND FURNISHED APARTMENTS UNTIL I FOUND A SMALL UNFURNISHED HOUSE NEAR SCHOOL.


THAT BED...


I MOVED THAT BED, ALONG WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER SMALL PIECES OF FURNITURE INTO MY HOUSE. THE HOUSE WASN'T LUXURIOUS BUT IT WAS QUIET AND COMFORTABLE.
I WAS A JUNIOR IN COLLEGE THAT YEAR AND I DECLARED BIOLOGY AS MY MAJOR... HAVING NO ROOMMATES OR DISTRACTIONS MADE MY NEW HOUSE A PERFECT PLACE TO STUDY.
I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME IN THE LIBRARY OR AT HOME STUDYING. I DIDN'T HAVE VERY MUCH IN COMMON WITH OTHER STUDENTS WHO ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE TALKING ABOUT A WILD PARTY OR SOME BORING SPORTS EVENT.
I KEPT PRETTY MUCH TO MYSELF... I DIDN'T GO OUT ON DATES VERY OFTEN, AND WHEN I DID THEY INVARIABLY TURNED INTO A NIGHTMARE.


IT WAS A DARK, RAINY DAY IN THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY AND I WAS GOING OVER MY NOTES FOR AN UPCOMING EXAM IN MY MICRO-BIOLOGY CLASS WHEN I FIRST MET SHEILA.
HI... I'VE SEEN YOU IN SMITHSON'S BIOLOGY 300 CLASS... DO YOU HAVE A SECOND?
OH..UH SURE.
I WAS DISAPPOINTED WHEN I FOUND SHE ONLY WANTED TO COPY SOME NOTES FROM A CLASS SHE MISSED.
LOOK I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS.
I LOOKED UP HER TELEPHONE NUMBER IN THE STUDENT DIRECTORY AND SOMEHOW GOT UP ENOUGH NERVE TO CALL HER UP AND ASK HER OUT ON A DATE.
HI, SHEILA? THIS IS RON.. AND... UH...
Sheila
527-3872
TO MY SURPRISE, SHE NOT ONLY ACCEPTED, BUT SEEMED TO BE AS EXCITED AND ANXIOUS AS I WAS.

AFTER GOING OUT TO DINNER, I TOOK SHEILA DOWNTOWN TO A MOVIE.

THAT WAS ONE OF THE BEST SHOWS I'VE SEEN FOR YEARS. I'M REALLY NOT TIRED YET... DO YOU WANT TO STOP SOMEWHERE FOR A DRINK?

THAT SOUNDS FINE.

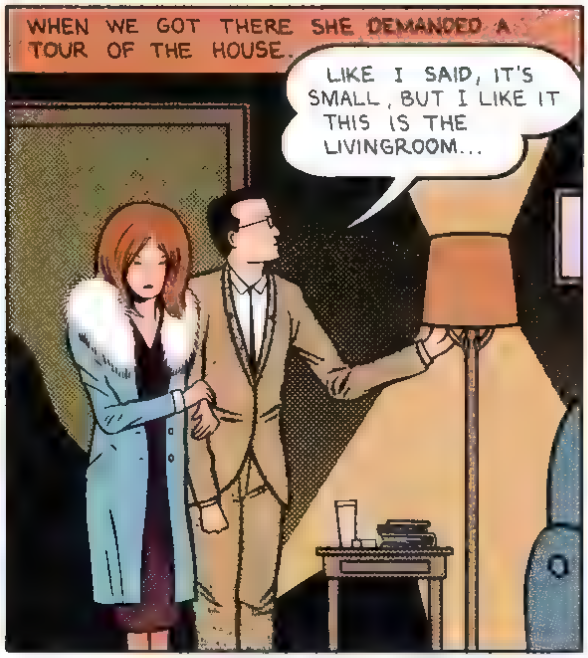
I WASN'T USED TO GOING TO BARS OR DRINKING, BUT I DIDN'T WANT SHEILA TO THINK I WAS A SQUARE...

SHEILA ORDERED MARTINIS FOR BOTH OF US... I COULD FEEL THE ALCOHOL GOING TO MY HEAD IMMEDIATELY.

LET'S HAVE ANOTHER.

AS WE SAT AND TALKED, I NOTICED SHEILA WAS BECOMING INTOXICATED... SHE MOVED CLOSER TO ME AND WAS ACTING MORE AFFECTIONATE.

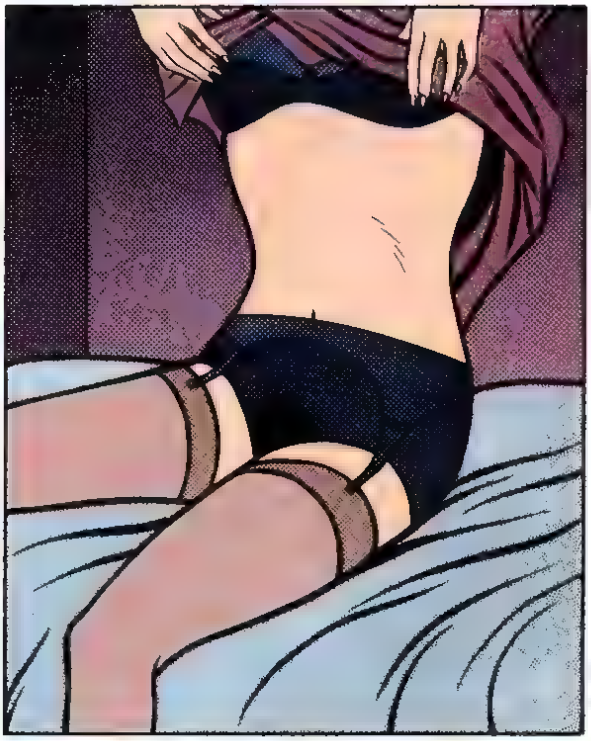
IT WAS AS IF I WAS BEING SWEPT ALONG THROUGH A DREAM THAT I HAD NO CONTROL OVER... I HEARD MYSELF SAY YES WHEN SHE ASKED TO SEE MY HOUSE.

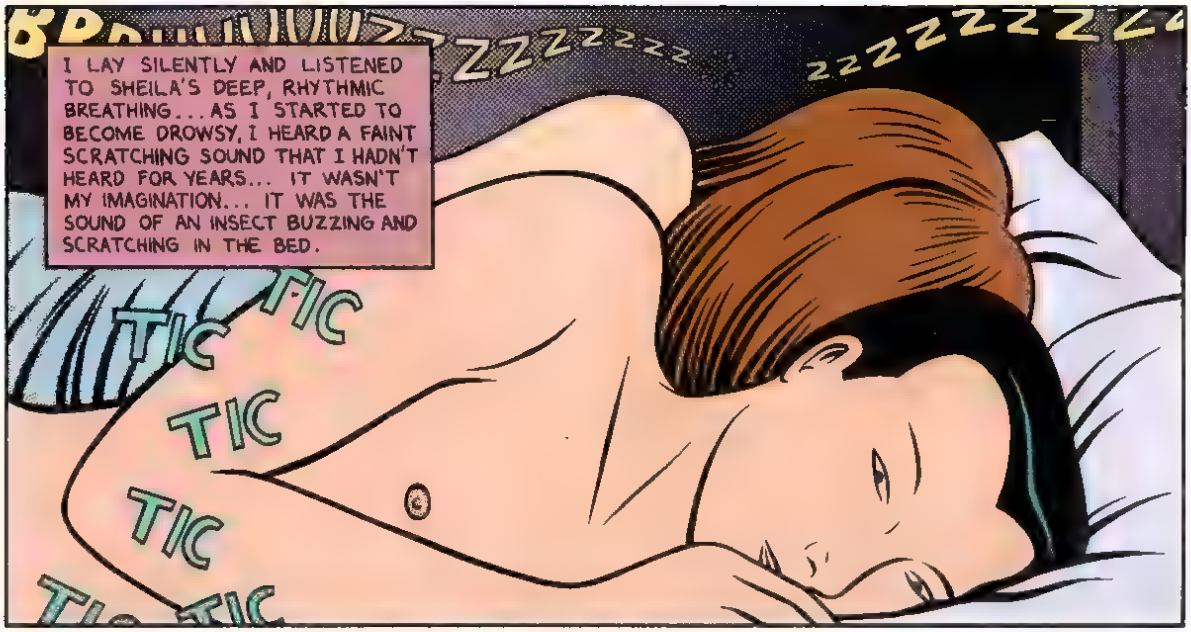

WHEN WE GOT THERE SHE DEMANDED A TOUR OF THE HOUSE.
LIKE I SAID, IT'S SMALL, BUT I LIKE IT THIS IS THE LIVINGROOM...

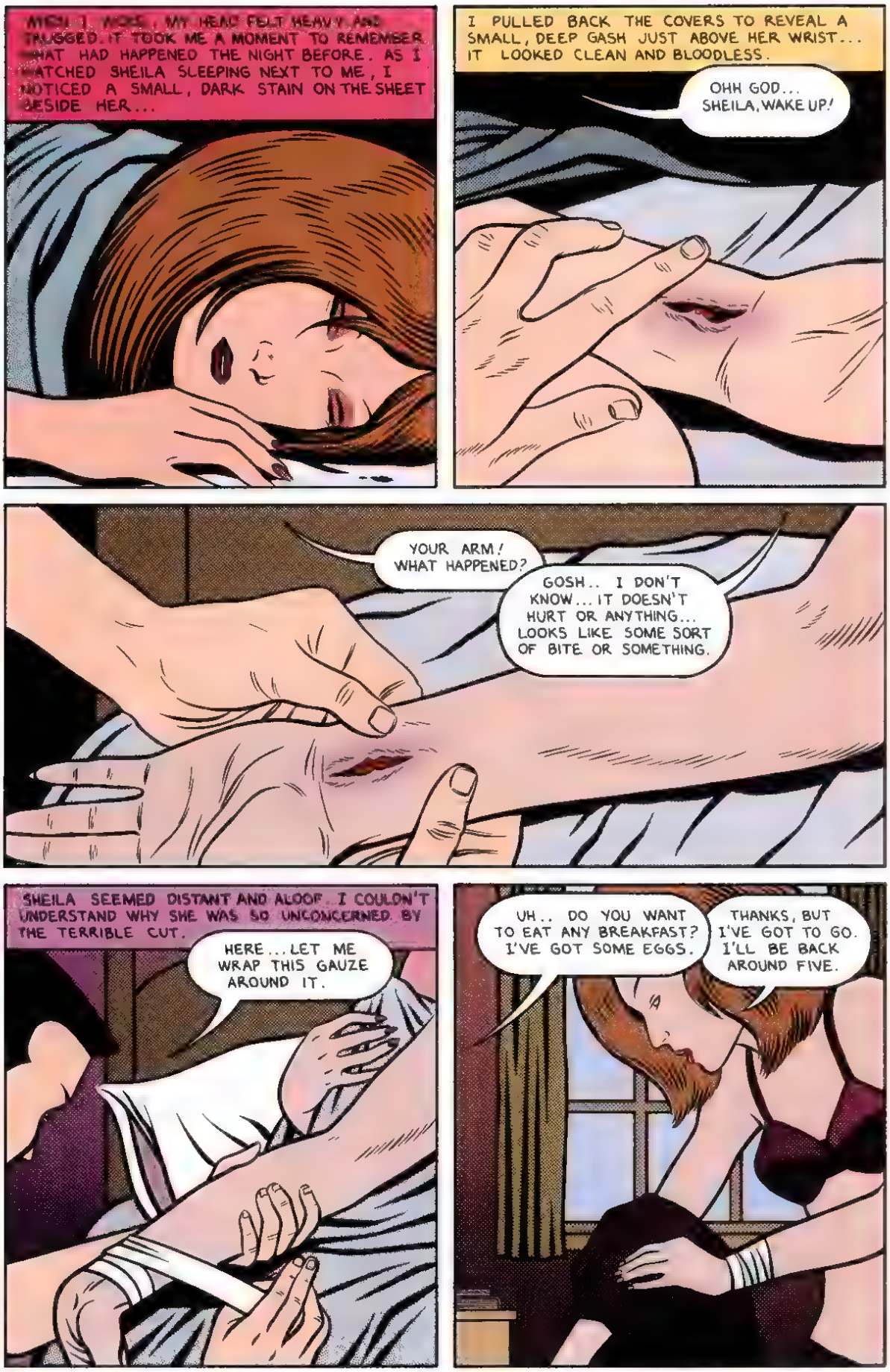
. AND HERE'S MY BEDROOM.
OOOHHH!

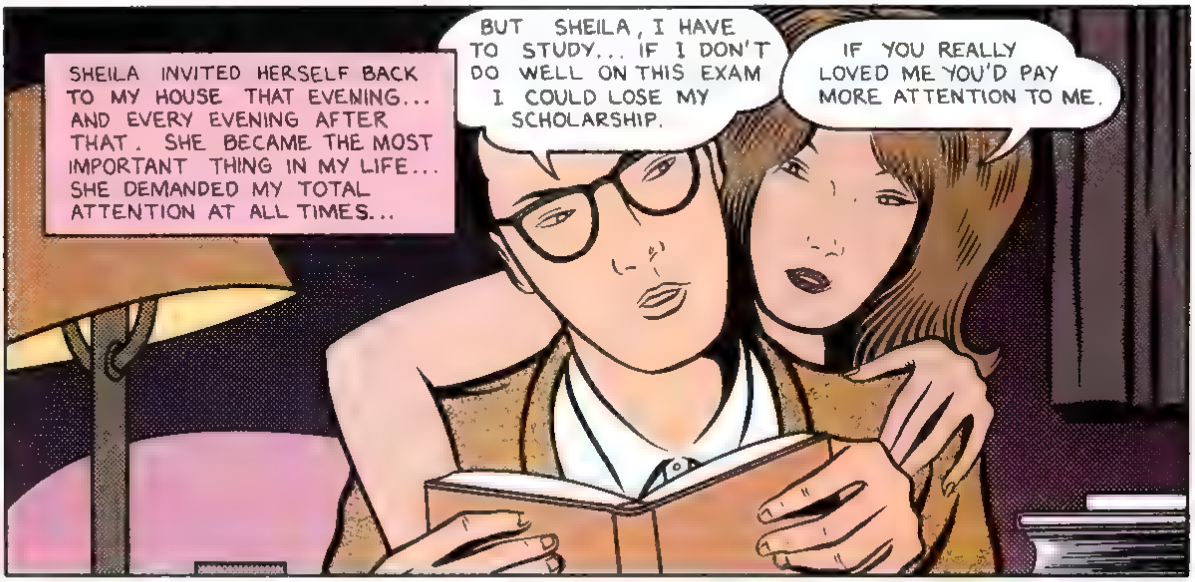
OH LOOK AT THIS ANTIQUE BED... IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

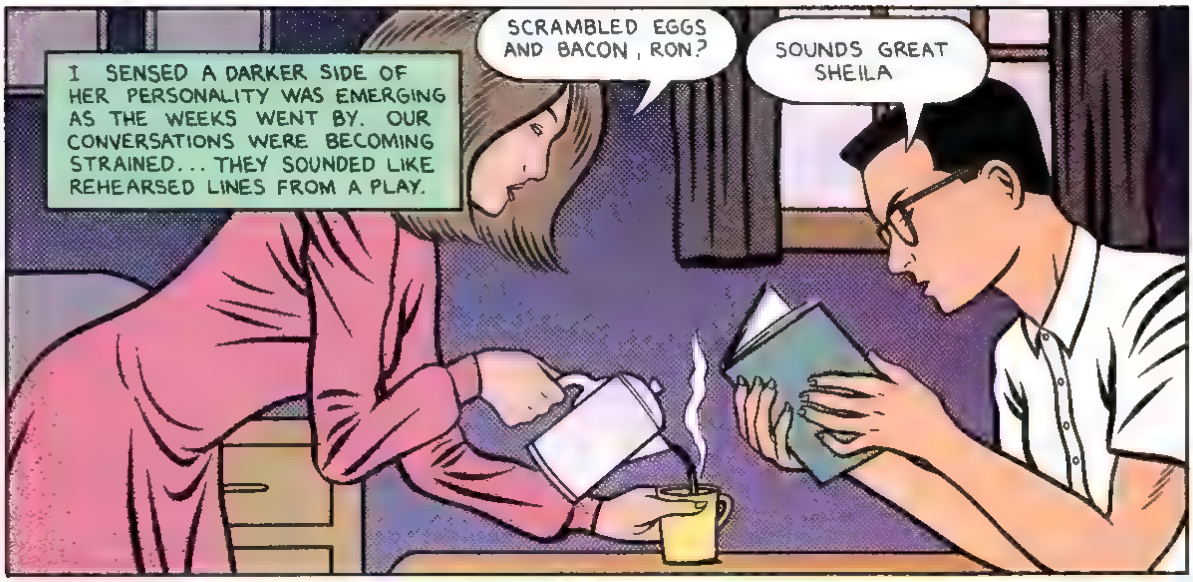
COME OVER HERE RON... DON'T WORRY, I WON'T BITE...



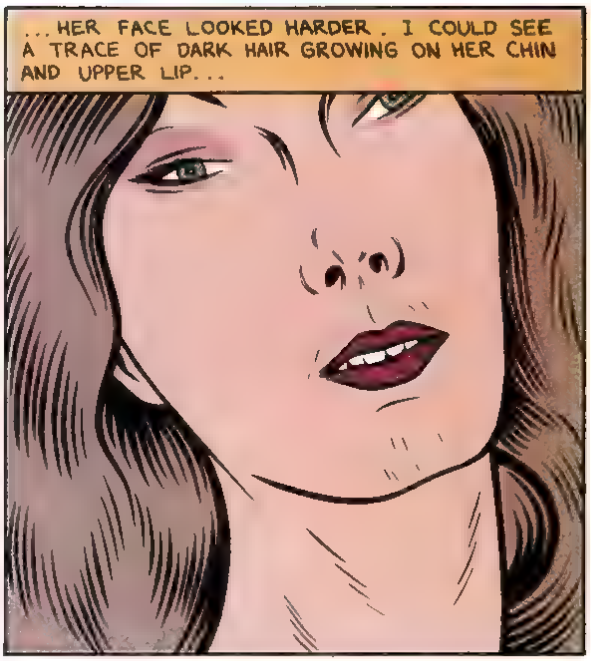

I LAY SILENTLY AND LISTENED TO SHEILA'S DEEP, RHYTHMIC BREATHING... AS I STARTED TO BECOME DROWSY, I HEARD A FAINT SCRATCHING SOUND THAT I HADN'T HEARD FOR YEARS... IT WASN'T MY IMAGINATION... IT WAS THE SOUND OF AN INSECT BUZZING AND SCRATCHING IN THE BED.
ZZZZZZZZ
ZZZZZZZZZZ
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC


WHEN I WOKE, MY HEAD FELT HEAVY AND FUGGED. IT TOOK ME A MOMENT TO REMEMBER WHAT HAD HAPPENED THE NIGHT BEFORE. AS I WATCHED SHEILA SLEEPING NEXT TO ME, I NOTICED A SMALL, DARK STAIN ON THE SHEET BESIDE HER...
I PULLED BACK THE COVERS TO REVEAL A SMALL, DEEP GASH JUST ABOVE HER WRIST... IT LOOKED CLEAN AND BLOODLESS.
OHH GOD... SHEILA, WAKE UP!
YOUR ARM! WHAT HAPPENED?
GOSH.. I DON'T KNOW... IT DOESN'T HURT OR ANYTHING... LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF BITE OR SOMETHING.
SHEILA SEEMED DISTANT AND ALOOF. I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE WAS SO UNCONCERNED BY THE TERRIBLE CUT.
HERE... LET ME WRAP THIS GAUZE AROUND IT.
UH.. DO YOU WANT TO EAT ANY BREAKFAST? I'VE GOT SOME EGGS.
THANKS, BUT I'VE GOT TO GO. I'LL BE BACK AROUND FIVE.

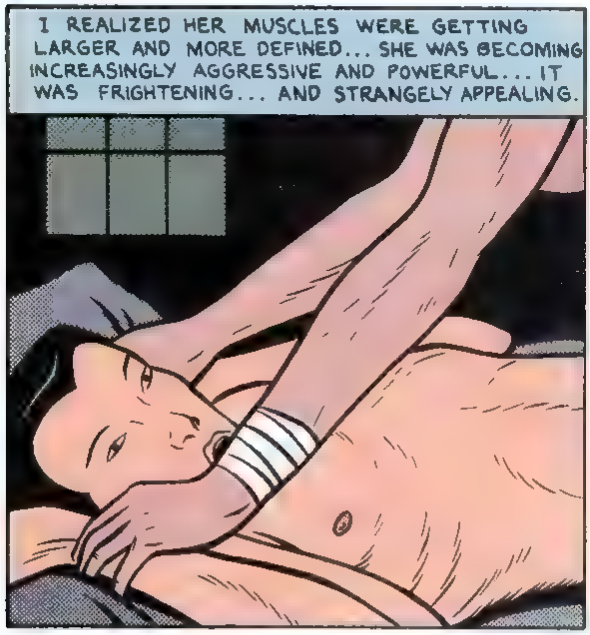

SHEILA INVITED HERSELF BACK TO MY HOUSE THAT EVENING... AND EVERY EVENING AFTER THAT. SHE BECAME THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN MY LIFE... SHE DEMANDED MY TOTAL ATTENTION AT ALL TIMES...
BUT SHEILA, I HAVE TO STUDY... IF I DON'T DO WELL ON THIS EXAM I COULD LOSE MY SCHOLARSHIP.
IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME YOU'D PAY MORE ATTENTION TO ME.


I SENSED A DARKER SIDE OF HER PERSONALITY WAS EMERGING AS THE WEEKS WENT BY. OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE BECOMING STRAINED... THEY SOUNDED LIKE REHEARSED LINES FROM A PLAY.
SCRAMBLED EGGS AND BACON, RON?
SOUNDS GREAT SHEILA

I ALSO NOTICED A PHYSICAL CHANGE TAKING PLACE... HER VOICE SEEMED ROUGHER AND DEEPER... SHE WAS LOSING WEIGHT...


...HER FACE LOOKED HARDER. I COULD SEE A TRACE OF DARK HAIR GROWING ON HER CHIN AND UPPER LIP...

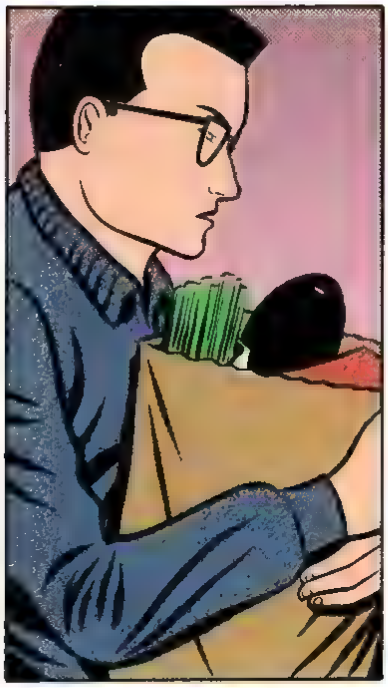
IT HAD BEEN OVER A MONTH SINCE THAT FIRST EVENING I SPENT WITH SHEILA, AND I NOTICED SHE STILL HAD HER WRIST BANDAGED. WHEN I QUESTIONED HER ABOUT IT SHE ANSWERED WITH HESITATION.
IT'S FINE... REALLY... I WENT TO A DOCTOR AND IT SHOULD BE BETTER SOON.

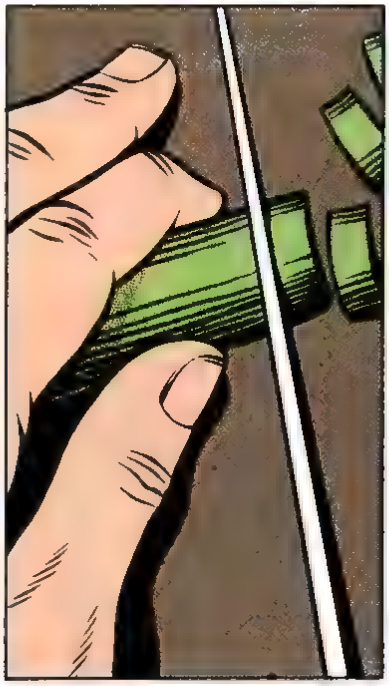

I REALIZED HER MUSCLES WERE GETTING LARGER AND MORE DEFINED... SHE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY AGGRESSIVE AND POWERFUL... IT WAS FRIGHTENING... AND STRANGELY APPEALING.

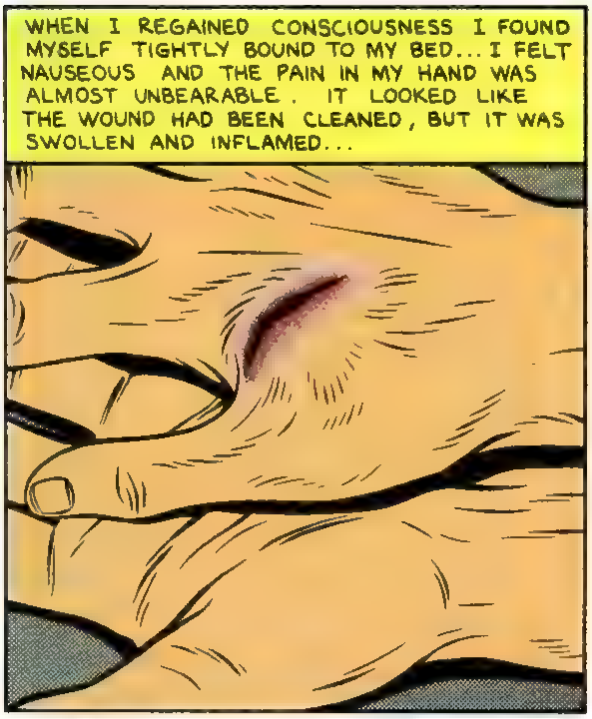
ONE EVENING I WAS LOOKING AT THE BANDAGE ON HER ARM AND NOTICED A LARGE LUMP IN THE CENTER... AS I WATCHED IT I THOUGHT I SAW IT MOVE SLIGHTLY.

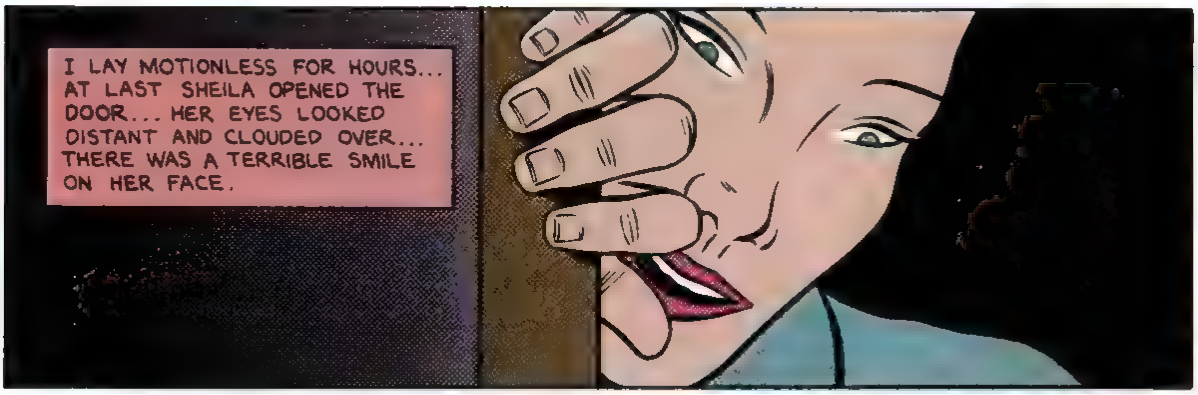
I GUESS THE REAL TURNING POINT WAS WHEN I CAME HOME FROM SCHOOL ONE DAY AND SHE HAD CUT OFF ALL OF HER BEAUTIFUL HAIR. IT WAS THEN THAT I FORCED MYSELF TO REALIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CHANGE TAKING PLACE IN HER BODY... AND HER MIND.

I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE HAIRCUT. I HAD SOME GROCERIES FOR DINNER, SO I CARRIED THEM TO THE KITCHEN AND STARTED TO CUT UP SOME VEGETABLES... WITH MY MIND ON SHEILA, I WAS CARELESS AND CUT MYSELF BADLY...

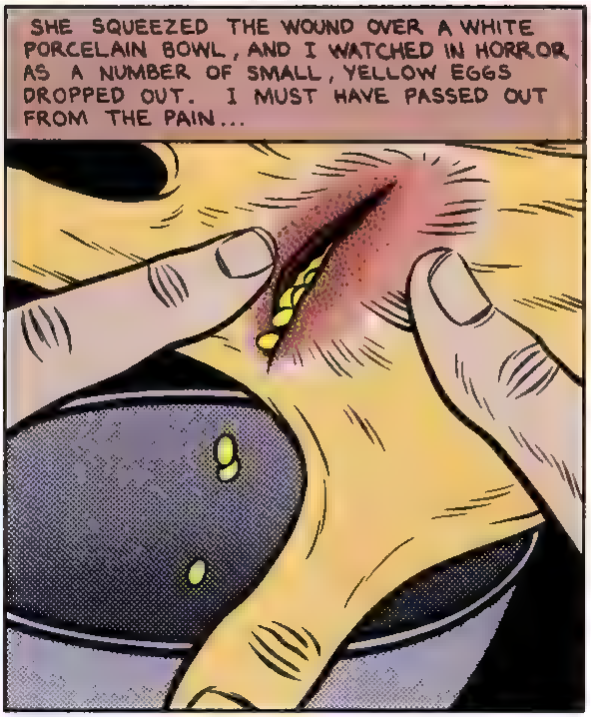


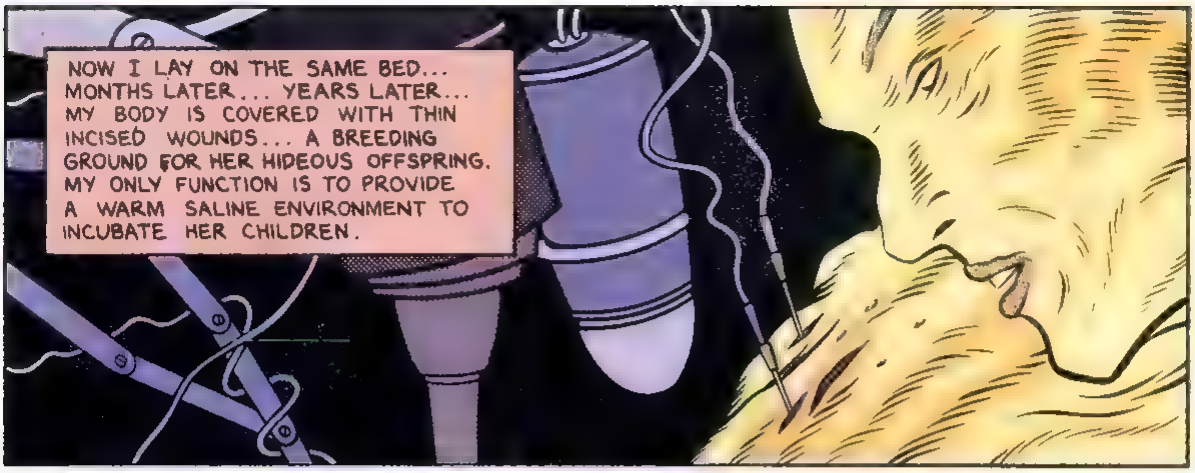



WHEN I REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS I FOUND MYSELF TIGHTLY BOUND TO MY BED... I FELT NAUSEOUS AND THE PAIN IN MY HAND WAS ALMOST UNBEARABLE. IT LOOKED LIKE THE WOUND HAD BEEN CLEANED, BUT IT WAS SWOLLEN AND INFLAMED...

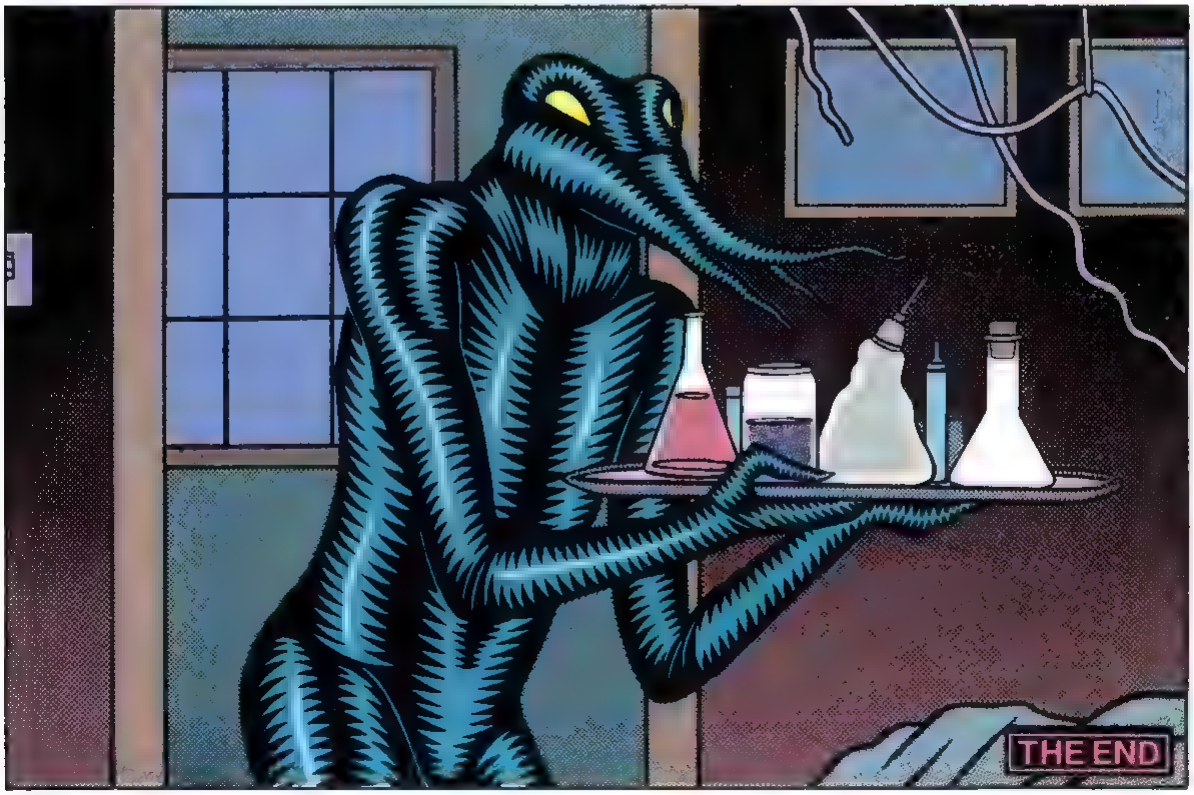

I LAY MOTIONLESS FOR HOURS... AT LAST SHEILA OPENED THE DOOR... HER EYES LOOKED DISTANT AND CLOUDED OVER... THERE WAS A TERRIBLE SMILE ON HER FACE.

WITHOUT A WORD, SHE CAME OVER TO THE BED TO EXAMINE MY HAND...


SHE SQUEEZED THE WOUND OVER A WHITE PORCELAIN BOWL, AND I WATCHED IN HORROR AS A NUMBER OF SMALL, YELLOW EGGS DROPPED OUT. I MUST HAVE PASSED OUT FROM THE PAIN...


NOW I LAY ON THE SAME BED... MONTHS LATER... YEARS LATER... MY BODY IS COVERED WITH THIN INCISED WOUNDS... A BREEDING GROUND FOR HER HIDEOUS OFFSPRING. MY ONLY FUNCTION IS TO PROVIDE A WARM SALINE ENVIRONMENT TO INCUBATE HER CHILDREN.

I HEAR THEM MOVING IN THE HALL AND DOWNSTAIRS... THEIR SLOW DRAGGING MOVEMENTS... IT MUST BE TIME FOR THEM TO FEED ME.


THE END

COMICS OF INTEREST

—AFTERSHOCK: futuristic tales of the war between the sexes. All women artists, including **Robbins, Gloeckner, Kominsky,** etc. **2.00**

ANARCHY No. 1: Great **Jay Kinney** "An-Archie" parody, plus much more madness! When politics can be laughed at, it's a state of... **1.25**

—ANARCHY No. 2: true to title; fine graphic cover. **Jay Kinney** edits. **1.25**

—ANARCHY No. 3: more pages; featuring **Cliff Harper; Peter Pontiac** cover; other European and American **(Spain, Steve Stiles)** artists. **2.00**

—BANZAI: funny stuff from **Joel Beck** (a close look at the comics collecting racket); a **Kim Deitch** trio; and a scary **Roger Brand** tale! **1.00**

—BAREFOOTZ No. 2: Howard Cruse creates a zany world of frogs, roaches and the mysterious "Glory," all looked over by a true bigfoot character! **1.25**

—BAREFOOTZ No. 3: Howard Cruse strikes again! Stories include the famous "Headrack Comes Out" story, plus more tales of Glory, frogs, and roaches. **1.25**

—BIZARRE SEX No. 1: Seminal **Kitchen** cover. *Back in print again!* **2.00**

—BIZARRE SEX NO. 4: new **Robert Triptow** story; outrageous cover. **2.00**

—BIZARRE SEX No. 6: magazine-sized comic; **Richard Corben** cover. **2.00**

—BIZARRE SEX No. 7: cover by **John Pound; Richard Larsen.** **1.75**

—BIZARRE SEX No. 8: H. Cruse story; **R. Crumb** cover; more! **1.75**

—BIZARRE SEX No. 9: the introduction of **Reed Waller's** "Omaha, the Cat Dancer." Special, expanded issue. Racy intrigue. **1.75**

—BIZARRE SEX No. 10: "Omaha" epilogue **Bil Stout** cover. **1.75**

—BLOOD ON THE MOON: Jaxon's gripping tale of Quanah Parker, a leader of the Comanches in Texas in the mid-1800s. True story. **1.25**

—BOP: Big magazine, edited by **Cat Yronwode,** mixes comics and music. Included: **Alex Toth, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bo Diddley,** much more! **2.75**

—CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE No. 2: This series, by cartoonist-scholar **Larry Gonick,** recounts in an easy to read, funny, yet accurate way, the origin of the universe, and traces various civilizations and their impact from ancient times. No. 2: "Sticks and Stones." **1.50**

—CARTOON HISTORY No. 3: "River Realms (Sumer & Egypt)" **1.50**

—CARTOON HISTORY No. 5: "Brains and Bronze (Greece)" **1.50**

—CARTOON HISTORY No. 7: "All About Athens." **2.00**

—CHECKERED DEMON No. 1: collection by **S. Clay Wilson** **1.50**

—CHECKERED DEMON No. 3: More **Wilson** at his raucous best. **1.50**

—COMMIES FROM MARS No. 3: Well before 'V', there was... **1.50**

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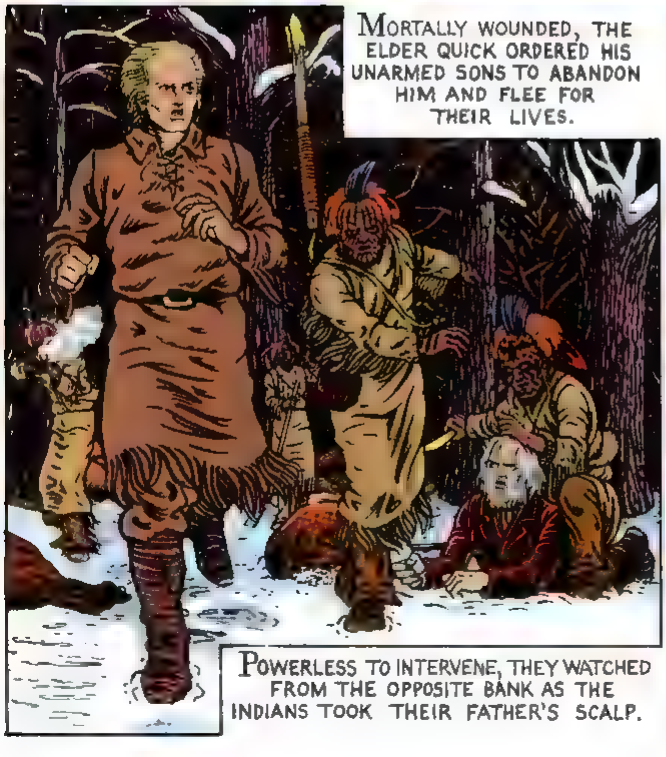
TRUE TALES FROM PENN'S WOODS

TOM QUICK'S REVENGE

C. Dallas

IN 1733, HOLLANDERS TOM QUICK AND HIS WIFE BECAME THE FIRST WHITE SETTLERS ON THE UPPER DELAWARE RIVER, IN PRESENT-DAY MILFORD, PIKE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA. TOM QUICK, JR., THE FIRST OF 5 CHILDREN, WAS BORN IN 1734. FOR MANY YEARS THE FAMILY OPERATED SAW AND GRIST MILLS ALONG VAN DE MARK CREEK WHILE MAINTAINING A FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LENNI LENAPE, OR DELAWARE INDIANS.

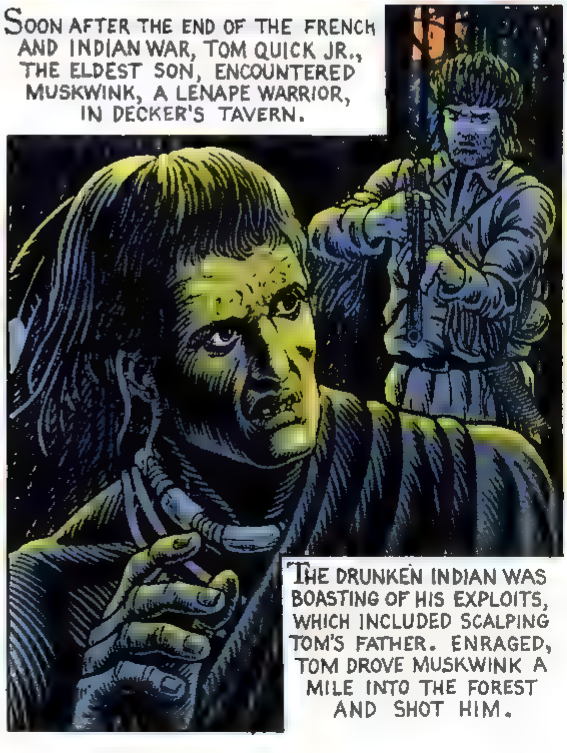
BUT BY 1757, THE INDIANS COULD TOLERATE THE INVASION OF THEIR LAND NO LONGER, AND RESOLVED TO DRIVE OFF ALL THE WHITES. ONE MORNING AS QUICK AND HIS SONS WERE CARRYING GRIST ACROSS THE FROZEN DELAWARE, THE LENAPE STRUCK FROM AMBUSH.



MORTALLY WOUNDED, THE ELDER QUICK ORDERED HIS UNARMED SONS TO ABANDON HIM AND FLEE FOR THEIR LIVES.

POWERLESS TO INTERVENE, THEY WATCHED FROM THE OPPOSITE BANK AS THE INDIANS TOOK THEIR FATHER'S SCALP.

SOON AFTER THE END OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, TOM QUICK JR., THE ELDEST SON, ENCOUNTERED MUSKWINK, A LENAPE WARRIOR, IN DECKER'S TAVERN.



THE DRUNKEN INDIAN WAS BOASTING OF HIS EXPLOITS, WHICH INCLUDED SCALPING TOM'S FATHER. ENRAGED, TOM DROVE MUSKWINK A MILE INTO THE FOREST AND SHOT HIM.

OVER MUSKWINK'S BODY, QUICK VOWED ETERNAL VENGEANCE ON THE ENTIRE INDIAN RACE, THE COMBINED BLOOD OF WHICH, HE FELT, WAS NOT WORTH THAT OF HIS FATHER.

THE GOVERNMENT FEARED QUICK WOULD INCITE ANOTHER INDIAN WAR AND HAD HIM ARRESTED FOR MURDER. BUT WHEN THE OFFICERS TRANSPORTING HIM TO TRIAL STOPPED AT DECKER'S TAVERN, TOM'S FRIENDS FEIGNED A DRUNKEN CELEBRATION AND FREED HIM IN THE CONFUSION.

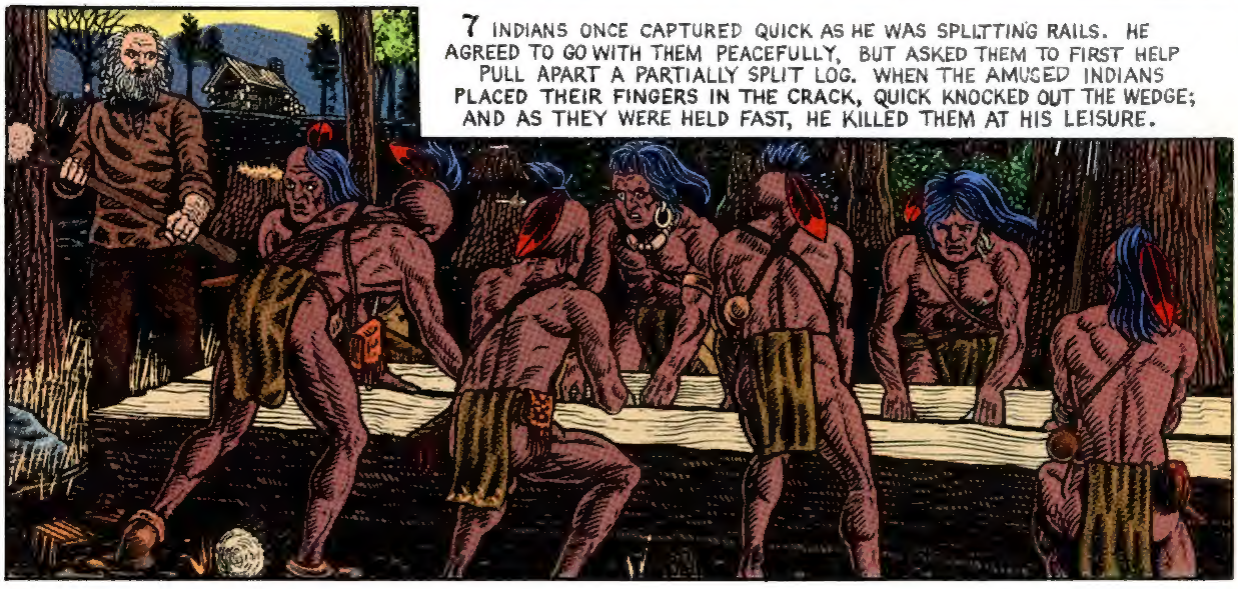
QUICK SWAM ACROSS THE ICY DELAWARE AND HID IN THE WILDERNESS FOR 6 WEEKS UNTIL THE BOUNTY-HUNTERS GAVE UP LOOKING FOR HIM.

SOMEWHAT LATER, QUICK, HIS NIECE MAGGIE, AND HIS DOG JACK WERE CAPTURED IN THE DELAWARE WATER GAP BY 13 INDIANS AND TAKEN TO A CAMP AT THE HEADWATERS OF BUSHKILL CREEK.

THE INDIANS FAILED TO RECOGNIZE QUICK AND BELIEVED HE WAS MERELY A WANDERING HUNTER AND TRAPPER. ONE DAY, WHILE 11 OF THE BAND WERE OFF HUNTING, QUICK SLEW HIS 2 GAURDS AND THE TRIO ESCAPED.

FLEEING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS BACK TO MILFORD, QUICK NOT ONLY ELUDED THEIR CAPTORS, BUT KILLED 3 OTHER INDIANS THEY MET BY CHANCE.

7 INDIANS ONCE CAPTURED QUICK AS HE WAS SPLITTING RAILS. HE AGREED TO GO WITH THEM PEACEFULLY, BUT ASKED THEM TO FIRST HELP PULL APART A PARTIALLY SPLIT LOG. WHEN THE AMUSED INDIANS PLACED THEIR FINGERS IN THE CRACK, QUICK KNOCKED OUT THE WEDGE; AND AS THEY WERE HELD FAST, HE KILLED THEM AT HIS LEISURE.



3 INDIANS, SWORN TO KILL QUICK, TRACKED HIM FOR 1½ YEARS. UPON FINDING HIS CAMPSITE, THEY SET UP AN AMBUSH. BUT QUICK SAW THEM FIRST, CIRCLED AROUND BEHIND AND SHOT 2 AS THE THIRD FLED.

QUICK'S EXPLOITS WERE NOT ALWAYS IN SELF-DEFENSE, SUCH AS THE TIME HE MURDERED A SQUAW AND 2 CHILDREN IN A CANOE ON THE DELAWARE.

A HUNTING TRIP WITH AN UNWARY INDIAN NETTED 7 DEER. QUICK WAS TO TAKE THE MEAT, AND THE INDIAN THE HIDES, BUT TOM SHOT HIM IN THE BACK AND LATER BOASTED OF KILLING A BUCK WITH 8 SKINS.

THE INDIAN SLAYER KEPT A CAREFUL COUNT OF HIS 99 VICTIMS. ON HIS DEATHBED, QUICK BEGGED HIS ATTENDANTS TO BRING IN AN ELDERLY INDIAN WHO LIVED NEARBY, THAT HE MIGHT KILL HIM TO MAKE AN EVEN 100.

SOME CLAIM THAT WHEN QUICK DIED OF SMALLPOX IN 1796, VENGEFUL INDIANS RETURNED FROM THE WEST TO EXHUME AND BURN HIS REMAINS. IN SO DOING, THE TRIBE CONTACTED SMALLPOX AND PERISHED. THUS, QUICK KILLED MORE INDIANS IN DEATH THAN HE HAD IN LIFE.

TOM QUICK, AVENGER OF THE DELAWARE — STALWART DEFENDER OF THE BELEAGUERED FRONTIER, OR RACIST, PSYCHOPATHIC MURDERER? HE DIED AN OUTLAW, BUT WAS REVERED BY MOST SETTLERS AS A HERO. FOR NEARLY 40 YEARS, HE HAD PREYED UPON THE INDIANS AND ELUDED THEIR REVENGE. LEGENDS SPEAK NOT ONLY OF HIS COURAGE AND STRENGTH, BUT OF CRUELTY, DECEIT, AND ALL-CONSUMING HATRED AS WELL. BEFORE DEATH FINALLY CLAIMED HIM, QUICK SAW THE REALIZATION OF HIS LIFE-LONG DREAM — THAT DAY WHEN A WHITE MAN COULD WALK THE LENGTH OF THE DELAWARE WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING A SINGLE INDIAN.

END.

THE COSMIC CUE-BALL
IS BACK IN THIS DIMENSION.
Other than that, everything is under control.
DONALD SIMPSON ©1985
THE SEARCH BEGINS!
In MEGATON MAN No. 7
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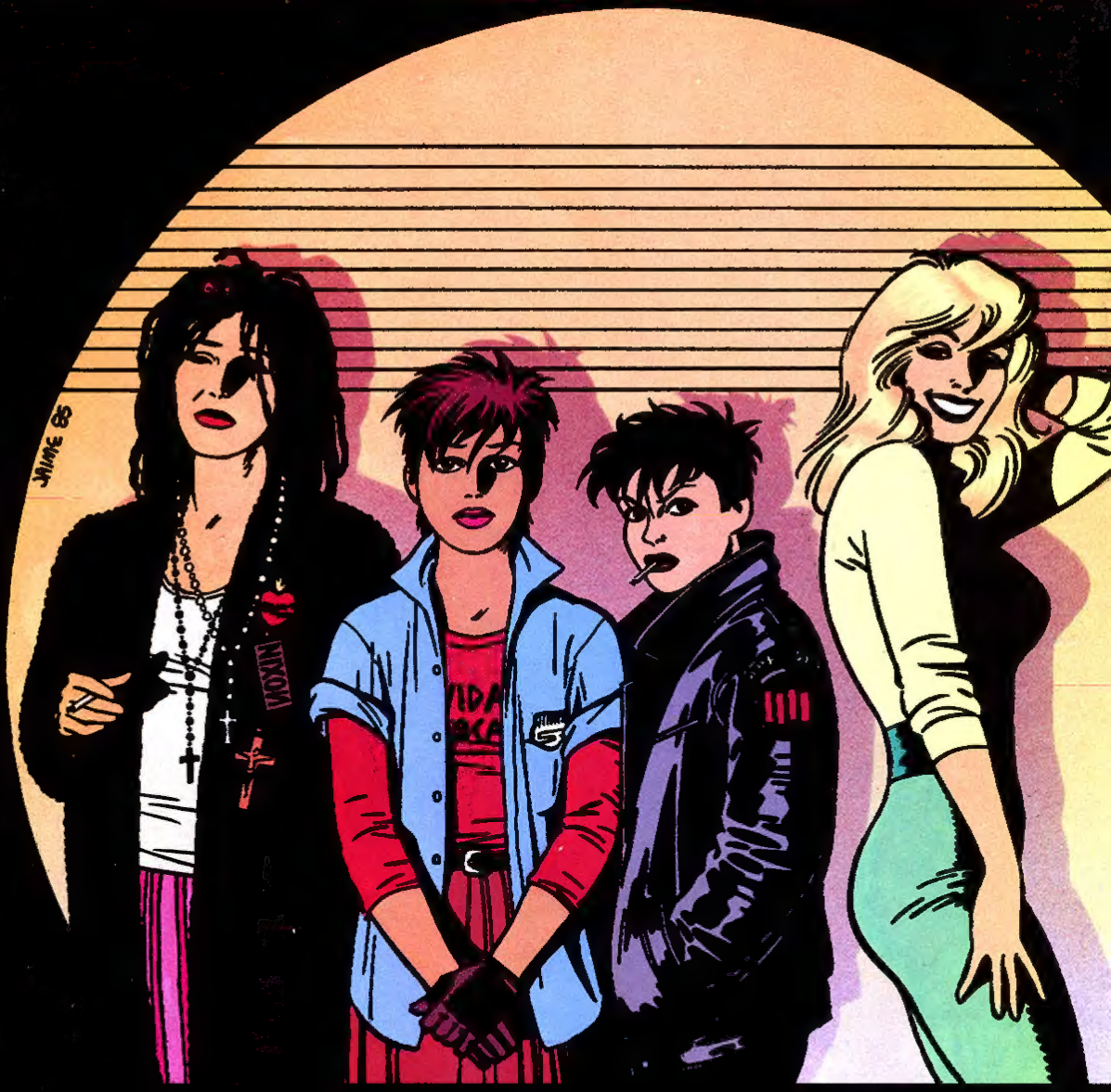

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